

Using a Peak Flow Meter

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- **A peak flow meter lets you know when your asthma is getting better or worse.**

A peak flow meter is like a thermometer for your lungs.

It measures the airflow out of your lungs. Children as young as three have been able to use the meter to help manage their asthma. Peak flow meter numbers can help you and your doctor to:

- Decide when to add or change medicine
- Decide how well medicine is working
- Decide when to get emergency care
- Identify triggers that cause asthma symptoms



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Asthma symptoms can creep up slowly. A peak flow meter can let you know when your asthma is getting worse before you even have symptoms. But first you have to know what your normal peak flow is. “Normal” is different for different people. A normal peak flow for a toddler is a lot less than a normal peak flow for a teenager. For this reason it is important for you to use your peak flow meter often to find out your own “personal best” peak flow. Talk to your doctor to learn more about peak flows.

To use a peak flow meter:

1. Stand up
2. Position the indicator (arrow) at the bottom of the numbers.
3. Take a deep breath, place the mouthpiece between your teeth, and close your lips tightly around the mouthpiece. Don't block the opening with your tongue!
4. Exhale hard and fast into meter to move the indicator.
5. Read the number at the position of the indicator.
6. Repeat one or two more times to get an accurate reading.
7. Clean the mouthpiece.

To obtain a “personal best” peak flow reading:

- Record peak flows readings twice a day for 2 weeks.
- Ignore numbers that seem “off” – ones that are really high or low.
- Do this when your asthma is under control, not when you are sick.
- The highest reading over a 2-week period is your “personal best.”

80-100% of personal best - asthma under control

50-80% of personal best - Caution, follow instructions on asthma management plan

50% or below personal best - Take rescue medications and contact doctor immediately!

