

## Peak Flow Meter

A peak flow meter is a hand-held device that measures the speed of air as it is forced from your lungs. It helps tell you how open your airways are. A peak flow meter can help you predict an asthma episode so you can take medicine to prevent a severe asthma flare-up. A peak flow meter helps **only** to check for early warning signs of asthma. It **does not** take the place of your medicine.

### Who Can Use a Peak Flow Meter

Children as young as four can be taught to use a peak flow meter. It is especially helpful for children who cannot tell if they are having symptoms of an asthma episode and for those with exercise-induced asthma. It can also be used to help you tell if your medicine is helping you.

### How to Use The Peak Flow Meter

1. Remove any gum or food from your mouth.
2. Move the pointer on the peak flow meter to zero.
3. Stand up.
4. Hold the peak flow meter so your fingers do not get in the way of the pointer.
5. Take a deep breath.
6. Place the mouthpiece into your mouth and tightly seal your lips around it.
7. Blow out **as hard** and **as fast** as you can (huff).
8. Remove the peak flow meter from your mouth.
9. Look at the pointer and write down the number.
10. Move the pointer to zero again and wait 5 to 10 seconds.
11. Repeat steps 3 to 9 two more times. (Blow into the peak flow meter **only** 3 times.)
12. Write down on your peak flow meter diary the **best** or **highest of the 3 readings**. Refer to the Helping Hand, HH-II-117, *Peak Flow Meter Diary*.
13. Use your peak flow meter in the morning and at night, or as directed by your doctor.



**Picture 1** Using a peak flow meter.

## What the Peak Flow Meter Readings Mean

Each person has his own **personal best** peak flow reading. Your personal best reading is found by looking at your peak flow readings when you are well. Your doctor will tell you your personal best reading after about 2 weeks of using the peak flow meter.

- A very low morning reading may be a warning sign of early asthma symptoms.
- If you cough while trying to blow into the peak flow meter, that is usually a sign that the asthma is not well controlled.
- Ask your doctor what to do if your peak flow readings fall below your personal best range.

## When to Use Your Peak Flow Meter

- Use the peak flow meter 2 times a day, every day or as directed by your doctor.
- Use it to help determine if your medicine is helping. After using your medicine, wait 15 minutes and then use your peak flow meter to get another reading. If the reading goes up, the medicine has helped.

## For Exercise-Induced Asthma

If you have exercise-induced asthma, you can use a peak flow meter to tell whether you can take part in physical activities. To do this:

1. Take the reading about one half hour before the activity.
2. If the reading is normal and you have no wheezing, you may take your medicine and participate.
3. If the reading shows that you are wheezing slightly, you can take your medicine and use the peak flow meter again in 20 to 30 minutes to see if you should take part in the activity.

## Follow-up Appointments

It is very important to keep your follow-up appointments. Take your peak flow meter diary with you to all appointments.

If you have any questions, be sure to ask your doctor or nurse.