

V. YOUR PEAK FLOW METER

A peak flow meter is a portable, hand-held device used to measure your ability to blow air out of your lungs. There are many kinds of peak flow meters. When this meter is used on a regular basis, it can help you and your doctor:

- Predict an asthma attack before it occurs
- Monitor your asthma
- Prescribe medicines to keep your asthma under control
- Determine if you need to change the way you are using your medicine
- Identify your asthma triggers



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A. How to use a peak flow meter

1. Slide the little marker down as far as it will go. This sets the meter to zero.
2. Stand up. Take a big breath with your mouth open. Hold the meter in one hand. Keep your fingers away from the numbers.
3. Quickly close your lips firmly around the tube. Do not put your tongue in the hole. Blow one time as fast and hard as you can.
4. The marker will go up and stay up. Do not touch the marker. Find the number where the marker stopped.
5. Blow 2 more times. Push the button down each time. Record the highest number.

B. Know your peak flow rate (PFR)

It is recommended that you record your peak flow rate (PFR) twice a day for a two to three week period. Usually the best time to do this is when your asthma is not giving you any problems. You can then calculate your personal best peak flow. Percentages of this PFR can then be used to calculate several zones and be used in the development of an action plan.

C. How to interpret peak flow rates (PFR)

Three zones of measurement are commonly used to interpret PFR. It is easy to relate the three zones to the traffic light colors: green, yellow, red.

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Green Zone: 80% ~ 100% of your personal best PFR signals all clear. A reading in this zone means that your asthma is under reasonably good control. It would be advisable to continue your prescribed program of management.

Yellow Zone: 50% ~ 80% of your personal best PFR signals caution. It is a time for decisions. Your airways are narrowing and may require extra treatment. Your symptoms can get better or worse depending on what you do, or how and when you use your prescribed medication. To be safe, call your doctor.

Red Zone: Less than 50% of your personal best PFR signals a Medical Alert. Immediate decisions and actions need to be taken. Severe airway narrowing may be occurring. Contact your doctor now. The doctor can tell you what treatment to start.

Some doctors may suggest zones with a smaller range such as 90-100%, especially if your asthma changes quickly. Always follow your doctor's suggestions about your Peak Flow Rate. The following flow chart can help you decide what actions to take:

Understanding PFR Zones

