



Your partners
in asthma management

PEAK FLOW METER

A peak flow meter is sometimes recommended as part of a treatment plan. These handheld devices measure how fast and how much air a person can blow out of his or her lungs.

Asthma causes patients to be unable to blow air out fast because their airways are narrowed. A low measurement with this device suggests problems are occurring with your child's asthma. These measurements can help warn patients or parents that their asthma may be acting up before they feel symptoms. This allows them to begin extra medication in order to prevent a more severe asthma attack.

When your child is having asthma problems, a peak flow reading puts a number on how he or she is doing, similar to how a thermometer measures a temperature.

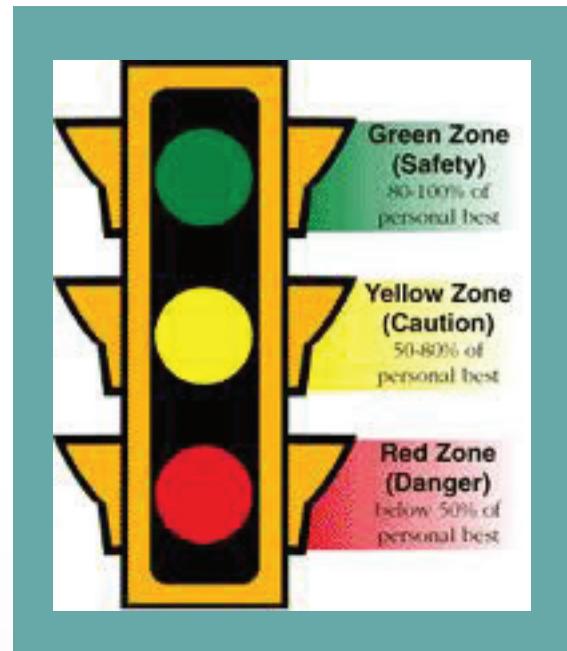
Your provider or asthma specialist will show you how to record your child's baseline measurements at a time when he or she is doing well with his or her asthma.

This is referred to as the "personal best." When your child's asthma is not doing well or is at risk of flaring up (such as during a cold), you can obtain a peak flow reading and compare the value to your child's personal best. Using a simple range of color zones—green, yellow and red, like traffic lights—you can determine how to prevent a full-blown asthma attack based on which color zone the reading falls. Peak flow measurements are most accurate when done at the same time every day. Daily monitoring allows us to track when subtle changes occur in the lungs.

How to use a peak flow meter

Your child's peak flow-based asthma treatment plan uses his or her own personal best peak flow reading because every child is unique. Your child's peak flow may be higher or lower than that of another child even though their ages, sex and height are identical.

To find your child's personal best, your provider will instruct him or her to use the peak flow meter at the same time every day for 2-3 weeks during a period when he or she doesn't have any symptoms and his or her asthma is under good control.



To obtain a peak flow measurement, have your child do the following:

1. Stand up.
2. Place the peak flow device indicator at 0.
3. Take a deep breath, and then place the device well into the mouth.
4. Close his or her lips around the mouthpiece and keep his or her tongue clear of the opening.
5. Blow once as hard and fast as he or she can. Note the reading.

Repeat steps 2-5 twice more and write down the highest score.

After your child has established her personal best, your provider may ask him or her to use the meter for readings when your child is beginning to have symptoms or has a cold (a time when asthma commonly gets worse). The provider may also ask you to monitor your child's peak flow when adjustments have been made to his or her medication program, whether it is up or down, to detect any change in asthma control.

Starting at about age 4 or 5 years, your child can learn how to use a peak flow meter. The green, yellow, and red zones correspond with your asthma action plan. Please use your asthma action plan for medications and further guidance.

Please remember peak flow monitoring is just one tool to measure your child's asthma. Spirometry, symptoms management and regular visits with your asthma educator are equally important.



KIDS FIRST
PEDIATRIC PARTNERS