



## Measuring your Peak Expiratory Flow Rate

---

A peak flow meter is a hand-held device used to measure the speed at which air is expelled from the lungs. The peak flow meter works by measuring your ability to force air out of your lungs after a full inhale. Using a peak flow meter together with an Asthma Action Plan (AAP) can help you monitor and keep your asthma under control.



## How to Use of a Peak Flow Meter


---

- Stand up straight.
- Move the marker to the bottom of the numbered scale.
- Take a deep breath filling your lungs.
- Place the mouthpiece in your mouth and close your lips. Do not put your tongue inside the hole.
- Blow out the air hard and fast in one quick blast.
- Move the marker back to the bottom and repeat these steps 2 more times. Record the highest of 3 numbers in your Peak Flow Meter (PFM) diary; this is your peak flow number. Your *Personal Best Number* is the number you reach over a two-week period, when you are feeling well.



# What is an Asthma Action Plan

- An Asthma Action Plan (AAP), is an asthma management plan, written together with your doctor to help you keep your asthma under control.
- The AAP works together with your personal best number. This number is divided into three zones (green, yellow and red); like the traffic signals.
- The AAP plan is individualized based on your asthma history. It contains written instructions on how and when to use your medicines monitoring symptoms, and when to seek emergency help. The picture below is an example of an asthma action plan, the zones, and the percentages in each zone.

**ASTHMA ACTION PLAN**  Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America  
aaafa.org

The colors of a traffic light will help you use your asthma medicines.

**GREEN means Go Zone!**  
Use preventive medicine.

**YELLOW means Caution Zone!**  
Add quick-relief medicine.

**RED means Danger Zone!**  
Get help from a doctor.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Doctor: \_\_\_\_\_ Medical Record #: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Doctor's Phone #: Day \_\_\_\_\_ Night/Weekend \_\_\_\_\_  
 Emergency Contact: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Doctor's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Personal Best Peak Flow: \_\_\_\_\_

**GO** Use these daily controller medicines:

MEDICINE	HOW MUCH	HOW OFTEN/WHEN

You have **all** of these:  
 • Breathing is good  
 • No cough or wheeze  
 • Sleep through the night  
 • Can work & play

Peak flow: from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

For asthma with exercise, take: \_\_\_\_\_

**CAUTION** Continue with green zone medicine and add:

MEDICINE	HOW MUCH	HOW OFTEN/ WHEN

You have **any** of these:  
 • First signs of a cold  
 • Exposure to known trigger  
 • Cough  
 • Mild wheeze  
 • Tight chest  
 • Coughing at night

Peak flow: from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

CALL YOUR ASTHMA CARE PROVIDER.

**DANGER** Take these medicines and call your doctor now.

MEDICINE	HOW MUCH	HOW OFTEN/WHEN

Your asthma is getting worse fast:  
 • Medicine is not helping  
 • Breathing is hard & fast  
 • Nose opens wide  
 • Trouble speaking  
 • Ribs show (in children)

Peak flow: reading below \_\_\_\_\_

**GET HELP FROM A DOCTOR NOW!** Your doctor will want to see you right away. It's important! If you cannot contact your doctor, go directly to the emergency room. **DO NOT WAIT.** Make an appointment with your asthma care provider within two days of an ER visit or hospitalization.

**Green Zone** (80-100 % of your personal best) your asthma is in good control, you can continue with your AAP.

**Yellow Zone** (60-80 % of your personal best) caution, you have probably been exposed to an asthma trigger, your airways are narrowing, and the air is coming out slower resulting a lowered peak flow rate. Follow the instructions on your AAP.

**Red Zone** (0-60 % of your personal best) This indicates a medical emergency, seek emergency help immediately or call 911.

## Sources

1. AAFA.org
2. Asthma.org.uk
3. Facts About Controlling Asthma, National Asthma Education and Prevention Program, National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, National Institutes of Health Publication No. 97-2339