

# HealthyActions

Achieving Your Goals for Healthy Living



## Go With the Flow

### Asthma triggers include:

- Pollen from the air or plants
- Animal or pet hair
- Exercise
- Smoke
- Dust mites
- Cold air or weather changes
- Infections



A peak flow meter is a small machine that you can carry with you. It measures how well air moves out of your lungs when you breathe. Peak flow meters tell you if your asthma is in control or getting worse. They are used to check your asthma the way that blood pressure cuffs are used to check high blood pressure.

During an asthma episode, the airways of your lungs can narrow slowly. The peak flow meter may help warn you hours before you have any asthma symptoms.

### Having asthma control means you:

Have no sudden asthma episodes

Have few or no symptoms

Don't use your rescue inhaler every day

Have your Personal Best Peak Flow reading (see other side)

Can be active and exercise

Don't miss school or work because of asthma

Don't wake from sleep due to your asthma

### A peak flow meter can be used to:

Check how your asthma is doing after taking your medication

Help your physician know when and how to change your medicine

Watch how your asthma is doing over time

Warn you when your asthma is headed for trouble so that you can better avoid an asthma attack

Help to decide when emergency treatment is needed

Help identify exercise-induced asthma



# Go With the Flow

Poor asthma control happens when you don't get the help you need in time.

Your doctor can best show you how to use your peak flow meter.



Ask your doctor to help you fill out an asthma action plan.

Like a traffic light, this helps you understand what your peak flow meter readings mean. Your goal is to have your peak flows in the **Green Zone.**

A peak flow reading gives you and your doctor an idea of how well your asthma is in control. Peak flow readings can be done before and after being around an asthma trigger.

Peak flow meters can be used during the spring or summer when your asthma may get worse. Talk to your doctor about your own *asthma action plan*. This plan will tell you what to do based on peak flow readings and symptoms.

## Peak Flow Meter Reading

Stand up

Make sure your peak flow meter is clean

Make sure the indicator is on the zero mark

Take a deep breath and put the mouthpiece of the peak flow meter in your mouth

Close your lips tightly around the mouthpiece and blow out as hard and as quick as you can

Make sure to not let your tongue block the mouthpiece

Repeat this two more times and write the highest number of the three blows

## Personal Best

Your personal best is found by measuring and writing down your morning and night peak flow numbers for 2 weeks. Check your peak flow readings at the same time and in the same situations. The highest number recorded becomes your personal best. Your personal best will help your doctor in creating your asthma action plan.

### References

National Heart Lung and Blood Institute. Diseases and Conditions Index. Asthma. Available at: [http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/Asthma/Asthma\\_Treatments.html](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/Asthma/Asthma_Treatments.html)  
American Lung Association. Available at: [www.lungusa.org](http://www.lungusa.org)