The Peak Flow Meter: Your Gauge of Success

What is a Peak Flow Meter?
During an asthma episode, it is difficult for air to flow through the bronchial tubes because these airways are narrowed. The peak flow meter measures how fast you can blow air out through these bronchial tubes, thereby letting you know how much bronchial tube narrowing is present at a given time. There are many different types of peak flow meters, but they all do the same thing.

How can a Peak Flow Meter help?
- It can tell you how much bronchial narrowing is present.
- It can give you advance warning of worsening asthma before your symptoms develop.
- It can signal when extra medicine can prevent worsening asthma.
- It measures how well your asthma medicines are working.
- It can help you talk with your doctor about your day-by-day asthma control.

Who Should Use a Peak Flow Meter?
If you are using medication for asthma, and if you are able to perform accurately the peak flow "maneuver" (e.g., if you are old enough), generally we recommend the use of a peak flow meter.

How is a Peak Flow Meter Used?
1. Stand up straight and make sure the pointer is at "zero" on the meter.
2. Take a deep breath, put your lips around the mouthpiece, and blow out as hard and fast as you can. Imagine there is a ping-pong ball in the peak flow meter and your job is to blow the ball as far across the room as possible.
3. Check to see how high the pointer went. This value is your "peak flow."
4. Repeat two more times and write down the highest peak flow of the three efforts.

When Do I Use the Peak Flow Meter?
- Check your peak flow first thing in the morning, before taking your inhalers or nebulized treatments, and again about 10 minutes after taking your asthma medications. This will allow you to see how much the medication has helped your asthma.
- Measure your peak flow again in the evening to see any change in asthma over the course of the day. Again, check your peak flow before and after taking your asthma medications.
- During asthma flares, check peak flows more frequently to follow the trend of improvement, or to warn of worsening asthma.

What Do the Peak Flow Readings Mean?
It is helpful to think about peak flow "zones":

The "Green Zone" is close to normal and indicates that your asthma is under good control. The "Yellow Zone" indicates a warning that your asthma may flare unless additional measures are taken. The "Red Zone" is your danger zone -- immediate treatment and/or a visit to your doctor is indicated.

You will have your own "zones" calculated for you, and an asthma self-management plan will be developed for you using your peak flow values.
Asthma Self-Management Plan

Use a Peak Flow Meter to help you monitor and manage your asthma.

Adjust your treatment plan based on the peak flow value measured before using your AM medication.

Helpful Hint: To make it easy to remember to take your asthma medications, associate or "link" the use of these medications with activities, such as mealtime or brushing your teeth.

Name:_____________________________________________________ Date: _________________

Your "Target Peak Flow" is ________________

“Green Zone”
- No (rare) cough or wheeze
- Sleeping through the night
- Tolerating activity easily

AND
Peak flow above ____________.
Indicates that your asthma is under good control. This is where you should be every day. Keep up the good work!

“Yellow Zone”
- At first sign of a cold
- Waking up at night with asthma
- More short of breath with activity
- Need reliever inhaler more often than usual

OR
Peak flow between ___________ and ____________.
Indicates a warning that your asthma may flare unless additional measures are taken.

“Red Zone”
- Getting little relief from your inhalers
- More breathless despite increased medications
- Peak flows do not respond to reliever inhaler

OR
Peak flow below ___________.
This is your danger zone. Take ACTION!

CONTROL your asthma with daily use of ________________
RELIEVE the symptoms of asthma with ________________

Treatment Plan:
1. Preventive inhaler: ________________
   _______ puffs _________ times daily.
2. Use your Reliever inhaler: _________ as needed
   for intermittent symptoms: _______ puffs every 4-6 hours
3. Before exercise use: ________________________
4. Check your peak flow ________ times daily
5. Other: _________________________________

Treatment Plan:
1) Use your Reliever inhaler: ________________________
   _______ puffs (or your nebulizer) _________ times daily.
2) Use your Preventive inhaler: ________________________
   _______ puffs _________ times daily.
3) Other: _________________________________
4) Continue at this dose for 5-7 days after your peak flow
   returns to the Green Zone, then resume Green Zone
   treatment plan.
5) Check your peak flow twice daily and if it does not return
   to the Green Zone within 3-5 days, contact your doctor’s
   office.

Treatment Plan:
1) Take your Reliever inhaler: ________________________
   _______ puffs (or your nebulizer) immediately. You may
   repeat this dose if symptoms are severe or response is poor.
   If symptoms continue to be severe or response poor, call
   911 immediately.
2) Re-check your peak flow. If peak flow is not out of the Red
   Zone, contact your doctor’s office immediately. If peak
   flow returns to the Yellow or Green Zone, follow the
   instructions for that zone.
3) Other: _________________________________
4) Check peak flow twice daily until asthma is controlled and stable.

If you have any questions or problems, call our office.