Use your peak flow diary to stay confident with your asthma

Noting your peak flow scores every day shows you
✔ if your asthma’s worse and when you need to take action
✔ when your medicines are keeping your airways open

Call our friendly expert nurses Mon-Fri; 9am-5pm
0300 222 5800
Any asthma questions?
Visit any time
www.asthma.org.uk
Or message on WhatsApp
Mon-Fri; 9am-5pm
07378 606 728
Welcome!

Your GP or asthma nurse might have recommended using a peak flow meter and recording your scores in a peak flow diary. Here we explain how it can be helpful and how to do it.

Peak flow is just one of a number of ways you can keep an eye on how well you are. Your symptoms and how you feel will always be important, too.

Whether you’re recording your peak flow scores every day, or for a set period of time as advised by your GP or asthma nurse, you’ll get the most out of your peak flow diary if you use it alongside a written asthma action plan. Your asthma action plan will tell you what to do when you notice symptoms, or if your peak flow drops below a certain score.

If you have any questions about peak flow, how to use your peak flow meter, or how to fill in your diary, you can call our Helpline nurses on 0300 222 5800 or message them using WhatsApp on 07378 606 728.

About you and your peak flow

Name: 

GP or asthma nurse contact number: 

My best peak flow (when I am well) is: 

When my peak flow drops below I need to talk to my GP or asthma nurse or follow the agreed steps in my asthma action plan 

My daily peak flow plan

In the morning I’m going to take my peak flow: 

eg. after breakfast/before getting dressed in the morning

In the evening I’m going to take my peak flow: 

eg. before I sit down for the evening/when I’m getting ready for bed

What is peak flow?

Peak flow is a measurement of how quickly you can blow air out of your lungs:

• If your airways are tight and inflamed you won’t be able to blow out so quickly and your score will be low
• If you manage to blow out quickly and forcefully you should get a high score. This tells you that your airways are open and working well.

It’s a good idea to check your peak flow throughout the year even when you’re well. This means you can monitor seasonal changes in your airways and identify any triggers such as cold weather or pollen.

says Asthma UK’s in-house GP

TOP TIPS

Here’s why some of our Facebook followers find checking their peak flow useful:

I totally recommend doing peak flow. It helps me track when I’m getting worse so I know when I need to go to the doctor.

I use a peak flow diary and record any symptoms I have and what I’ve been doing. This helps to build a whole picture and give the consultant and myself extra information to help control my asthma.

I definitely recommend using peak flow in conjunction with an asthma plan. It’s a very good indicator when to take the next course of action and to nip things in the bud, especially if you have difficult asthma.

You can get a peak flow meter from your GP, asthma nurse or pharmacy.
How will peak flow help me?

Measuring peak flow can be a reassuring way for you to keep an eye on your asthma. Some of us find it hard to admit that we’re not feeling well, and it can be easy to miss symptoms sometimes. A low peak flow score can help you spot when your asthma’s getting worse.

Recording your peak flow can also help you feel positive about your asthma – a good score shows how much of a difference you can make to your airways by sticking to your asthma medicines every day.

You can take your peak flow diary along to your asthma review, and any other asthma appointments, to show your GP, asthma nurse or consultant how your asthma’s been.

Use your peak flow diary to:
✔ help you feel confident that your medicines routine is really helping – it’s especially useful if you’ve changed to a new medicine or a different dose
✔ get an early warning of when your airways are struggling, even when you might be feeling OK, so you can take quick action to avoid an asthma attack
✔ help you keep a close eye on your asthma after an asthma attack
✔ get a better idea of what’s going on in your lungs so you can explain your asthma to friends, family and your GP
✔ identify triggers or allergies that could be making your asthma worse.

Know your scores

Peak flow scores vary depending on your age, your height and whether you’re a man or a woman. Peak flow scores also vary at different times of the day: it’s normal for your peak flow score to be slightly lower in the morning because peak flow falls overnight. Although this can be a sign of poorly controlled asthma.

Keeping a diary of your own individual peak flow scores over time helps you and your GP know what score to expect when you’re well and what scores suggest your asthma’s getting worse.

What does your best score tell you?
The score that’s usual for you when you’re well is sometimes called your ‘best’ score. Knowing your best peak flow score helps you know what ‘good’ looks like so you can feel confident that you’re managing your asthma well.

If you’re using your medicines as prescribed and following your action plan, you should stay quite close to your personal best peak flow score most of the time.

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✔ get an early warning of when your airways are struggling, even when you might be feeling OK, so you can take quick action to avoid an asthma attack
✔ help you keep a close eye on your asthma after an asthma attack
✔ get a better idea of what’s going on in your lungs so you can explain your asthma to friends, family and your GP
✔ identify triggers or allergies that could be making your asthma worse.

You need to check your peak flow:
✔ every day, twice a day to get a useful pattern of scores
✔ at the same times of day, in the morning and in the evening
✔ before you take your asthma medicine otherwise it will change the score
✔ using your best effort each time you blow into the meter so you’re comparing like with like
✔ using the same peak flow meter each time.

If you’re worried about how you’re feeling don’t wait for a lower than usual peak flow score before you seek help.

says Asthma UK’s in-house GP
Getting started

When you first get a peak flow meter ask your GP, asthma nurse or pharmacist to show you how to use it and how to take a reading. When you blow into your peak flow meter, do it three times and take a note of the score each time. All three results should be roughly the same, but it’s the highest score that you need to write on the peak flow chart.

How to use your peak flow meter

1. Pull the counter back as far as it will go
2. Stand, or sit upright (choose what’s easiest for you and always do it that way)
3. Take a deep breath
4. Make sure your mouth makes a tight seal around the mouthpiece
5. Blow as hard and fast as you can into the meter
6. Write down your score (the number next to the pointer)
7. Do this 3 times in a row so you get 3 scores – and use the highest of these scores to fill in your diary.

Tips to help you keep going

- **Get a good routine** – tell yourself exactly when you’re going to take your peak flow and write it down eg. ‘I’m going to do my peak flow before I leave the house in the morning and before I go to bed at night.’
- **Don’t worry if you forget one day** – just pick it up again the next day to get a useful pattern of scores.
- **Keep your peak flow meter with your preventer inhaler to make life easy** – and keep your peak flow diary and pen with them too.
- **Don’t forget to record your symptoms alongside your peak flow** and jot down what you’ve been doing that week. If you have symptoms but your peak flow hasn’t changed you still need to speak to your GP or asthma nurse.

With a bit of practice taking peak flow gets easier for most people. If you’re finding it difficult, or if you feel breathless or tight-chested afterwards, speak to your GP or asthma nurse, or call our Helpline for advice.

**How to record your peak flow**

There are three sections to fill in:

1. **If you experience any of these warning symptoms put a tick in the box for that day.**
   - If you have at least one tick a day three times a week or more, **or** if you’ve woken up at night with asthma symptoms even just once in the week, see your GP or asthma nurse as soon as possible.

2. **Twice a day record your peak flow score with a cross on the chart.**

3. **Use this section to note down anything unusual or different that may be the reason for a lower than usual peak flow score in a week** – eg. ‘I was stressed’; ‘I exercised on Tuesday’; ‘I came into contact with a pet’.

**Weekly comments:**

anything unusual this week that might have resulted in a lower score eg. ‘I was stressed’; ‘I exercised’; ‘I came into contact with a pet’.

The pollen has made my asthma worse this week. I also visited Jane who has a cat.

**Start recording your peak flow now**

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### Weekly Comments

**Week 1**

- **Monday**
  - Used reliever inhaler
  - Had asthma symptoms such as shortness of breath, tight chest, coughing or wheezing
  - Waking at night with asthma symptoms
  - Feeling like you can’t keep up with your normal day-to-day activities

**Tuesday**

- **Wednesday**

- **Thursday**

- **Friday**

- **Saturday**

- **Sunday**

**Week 2**

- **Monday**

- **Tuesday**

- **Wednesday**

- **Thursday**

- **Friday**

- **Saturday**

- **Sunday**

**Weekly comments:** anything unusual this week that might have resulted in a lower score? eg. 'I was stressed', 'I exercised', 'I came into contact with a pet'.
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<th>Week 3</th>
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### Weekly Comments:

Anything unusual this week that might have affected your asthma score?

*Weekly comments: anything unusual this week that might have affected your asthma score?*
If your peak flow score drops much lower than usual you may be at risk of an asthma attack. It can be reassuring to know how to spot the signs of an asthma attack and be clear about the steps you need to take.

⚠️ You’re having an asthma attack if:
- Your reliever inhaler is not helping or you need it more than every four hours.
- You find it difficult to walk or talk.
- You find it difficult to breathe.
- You’re wheezing a lot or you have a very tight chest or you’re coughing a lot.

⚠️ What to do in an asthma attack:

1. **Sit up straight** — try to keep calm.
2. **Take one puff of your reliever inhaler (usually blue)** every 30 - 60 seconds, up to a maximum of 10 puffs.
3. **If you feel worse** at any point OR you don’t feel better after 10 puffs call 999 for an ambulance.
4. **Repeat step 2 after 15 minutes** while you’re waiting for an ambulance.

**IMPORTANT!** This asthma attack information is not designed for people on a SMART or MART medicine plan. If you are on a SMART or MART medicine plan, please speak to your GP or asthma nurse to get the correct asthma attack information.

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For information, tips and ideas on everything from inhalers to triggers: [www.asthma.org.uk](http://www.asthma.org.uk)

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Contact us
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