



ASTHMA+
LUNG UK

YOUR

PEAK

FLOW

DIARY

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 why this can be helpful and how to do it.

Peak flow is just one of a number of ways you can keep an eye on your asthma. 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, use your peak flow diary alongside an 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 a respiratory nurse specialist on our Helpline on **0300 222 5800** or send a message on WhatsApp on **07999 377 775**.

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:

.....
e.g. after breakfast/before getting dressed in the morning.

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

.....
e.g. 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 your airways are open and working well, you should manage to blow out quickly and forcefully, and get a high score.



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.

Dr Andy Whittamore,
Asthma + Lung UK's in-house GP



You can get a peak flow meter from your GP, asthma nurse or pharmacy

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 action 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 to control asthma."

How will peak flow help me?

Measuring peak flow is another useful way 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 medicines and asthma action plan 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 know that your medicines are helping – especially if you've changed to a new medicine or a different dose
- get an early warning of when your airways are struggling, 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 pattern of scores to show your GP or asthma nurse how your lungs are working
- identify triggers, allergies or infections that could be making your asthma worse.



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

Dr Andy Whittamore,
Asthma + Lung UK's in-house GP

TOP TIPS



I've not been very good at admitting to myself when I'm unwell so my GP made peak flow part of my asthma plan."

"I tend to use mine just when I know I'm coming down with a cold or have a chest infection. Usually I have a big drop in peak flow at this time. The peak flow meter is handy just to keep an eye on things. Keep it next to your preventer inhaler for ease of use."

Swap ideas and tips with other people who have asthma at [facebook.com/AsthmaLungUK](https://www.facebook.com/AsthmaLungUK)



Know your scores

Peak flow scores vary depending on your age, your height and gender. Peak flow can vary at different times of the day too. For example, it's normal for your score to be slightly lower in the morning. The most important thing is whether your score is normal for you.

Keeping a diary over time gives you a pattern of peak flow scores that helps you and your GP or asthma nurse know what scores 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 when you're managing your asthma well.

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

You need to record your peak flow for at least two weeks to get a personal best score. Ask your GP or asthma nurse to re-assess your best score if it's been a few years since it was checked.

What does it mean when your score is lower than usual?

If you get a peak flow score that's lower than your best score, it can act as an early warning sign and help you prevent an asthma attack.

It can also help you identify triggers, allergies, or infections that could be making your asthma worse. Talk to your GP or asthma nurse about what low scores you need to look out for and what action you need to take. You can write this down on your asthma action plan.

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.

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 (the red arrow) back as far as it will go to the top near the mouthpiece.
- 2 Stand, or sit upright (choose what's easiest for you and always do it that way).
- 3 Take the deepest breath you can.
- 4 Make sure your mouth makes a tight seal around the mouthpiece.
- 5 Blow as hard and as fast as you possibly can into the meter.
- 6 Write down your score (the number next to the pointer).
- 7 Do this three times in a row so you get three scores. These will all be roughly the same, but use the highest score of the three to fill in your diary.

Call our respiratory nurse specialists on **0300 222 5800** or message via WhatsApp on **07999 377 775**, (Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm)

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 e.g. '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 a 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.

Dr Andy Whittamore,
Asthma + Lung UK's in-house GP



How to record your peak flow

Day of the week	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
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				✓			

	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM
800												
780												
760												
740												
720												
700												
680												
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260												
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220												
200												
180												
160												
140												
120												

Weekly comments: anything unusual this week that might have resulted in a lower score? e.g. 'I was stressed', 'I exercised', 'I came into contact with a pet'.

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

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.

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're finding it difficult to walk or talk.
- You're finding 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 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. If the ambulance has not arrived after 10 minutes and your symptoms are not improving, repeat step 2.
5. If your symptoms are no better after repeating step 2, and the ambulance has still not arrived, **contact 999 again immediately.**

Even if you feel better, make an urgent same-day appointment with your GP or asthma nurse.

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

Your online asthma community is always there for you:

Swap ideas with others who have asthma:

facebook.com/AsthmaLungUK

Get information, tips and ideas on everything from inhalers to triggers and managing your asthma:

AsthmaAndLung.org.uk/get-support

Get the latest asthma news by following us on Twitter:

@AsthmaLungUK

Get more health advice and asthma news with Asthma UK email updates

AsthmaAndLung.org.uk

ASTHMA QUESTIONS?

Ask our respiratory nurse specialists

Call **0300 222 5800**

WhatsApp **07999 377 775**

(Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm)

**Together we fight
for lung health**



Helpline: **0300 222 5800**

[AsthmaAndLung.org.uk](https://www.AsthmaAndLung.org.uk)

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