



**ALEXIAN  
BROTHERS**  
St. Alexius Medical Center

# ASTHMA EDUCATION NEWSLETTER

Volume 2, Issue 3

June 2009

## UPCOMING ASTHMA CLASSES AT SAMC

\*July 16, 2009

“ASTHMA: FACT,  
MYTH, AND  
MANAGEMENT”

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## UPCOMING NEWSLETTER TOPICS

\*Triggers

\*Action plan

\*Peak flows

\*Environmental Controls

\*Special Topics in Asthma management

\*And much more!

## What is a Peak Flow Meter?

Many doctors recommend peak flow meters for their Asthmatic patients. A peak flow meter is a quick breathing test that tells you how your Asthma is at any given moment. It is a tool that helps to monitor your symptoms and catch attacks early.<sup>2</sup>

Peak flow meters come in many different styles and colors.<sup>2</sup> One example is show in the picture below.



It is important to choose a peak flow meter that you are comfort-

able with and only use that kind. Many peak flow meters vary, so be sure to use only one particular model. Remember to bring it to your doctor's appointments so that your peak flow numbers can be monitored.<sup>4</sup>

Here are some tips on how to use a peak flow meter correctly<sup>3</sup>:

1. Check to be sure the indicator is all the way at the bottom of the peak flow meter scale.
2. Exhale completely.
3. Place the mouthpiece in your mouth and form a good tight seal (make sure your tongue is underneath the mouthpiece).
4. Take a big breath in and blow as hard and fast as you can. Really blast the air out!
5. Check to see what number you got and repeat the process two

more times. The highest number out of three tries is your peak flow number for the day.<sup>3</sup>

If you are using a peak flow meter for the first time, you need to figure out your “personal best” peak flow number. This is your highest peak flow reading on a day when you are feeling good and aren't having any Asthma symptoms. To find your personal best, do your peak flows two times each day for two weeks. You should choose two consecutive weeks when you are feeling well and are not having any Asthma symptoms. The highest number you reach is your personal best number.<sup>5</sup>

Now let's put these numbers to work....

## Now what do I do with all these numbers?

After you find your personal best number, you should have your doctor's office help you to set your peak flow zones. Peak flow zones are ranges of numbers that are organized like a traffic light. Peak flow zones tell you how your Asthma is at a quick glance.<sup>3</sup>

“Green Zone” means that today's peak flow number is 80-100% of your personal best number. This

means you are doing well! Don't forget to keep taking your maintenance medications though!<sup>3</sup>

“Yellow Zone” means that today's peak flow number is at 50-80% of your personal best number. You may be having Asthma symptoms and should talk with your doctor about what to do when you are in this zone.<sup>3</sup>

“Red Zone” means that today's peak flow number is less than 50% of your personal best. This is an Asthma emergency! You should seek medical help immediately.<sup>3</sup>

We will talk more about peak flow zones and what to do in each zone in our next Asthma newsletter.

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1 <http://www.achooallergy.com/asthma-peakflowmeter.asp>

2 <http://aafa.org/display.cfm?id=8&sub=17&cont=174>

3 <http://www.lungusa.org/site/pp.asp?c=dvLUK900E&b=22586#4>

4 [http://www.peakperformanceusa.info/asthma\\_management\\_guide/patient\\_guide.pdf](http://www.peakperformanceusa.info/asthma_management_guide/patient_guide.pdf)

5 <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/asthma/asthgdln.pdf>