

# PEAK FLOW METER

## PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT

A peak flow meter is a tool that can help you, your caregiver, and your health care provider manage your asthma. They are often very useful in helping people if they are unsure if they are having problems with their asthma. Make sure to ask your health care provider to assist you if you are having problems using your peak flow meter.

### HOW TO USE YOUR PEAK FLOW METER:

1. Turn the peak flow meter so the number side is up and slide the red arrow to the bottom of the scale. This step is very important and must be done each time before using the peak flow meter
2. Stand up if possible
3. Hold the meter in your hand making sure not to block the end or the arrow on the top side
4. Breathe in a comfortable breath
5. Breathe out comfortably and hold your breath for a few seconds
6. Breathe in a full deep breath
7. Immediately place the mouthpiece of the peak flow meter into your mouth and seal your lips around the mouthpiece. Do not place your tongue in front of the opening of the mouthpiece
8. Keep the peak flow meter level and blow out as hard and fast as you can
9. Record the number
10. Breathe normally for a few minutes and repeat steps 2-9 two more times. Record the highest number in your asthma symptom diary, asthma action plan, or on a calendar.

### HOW TO FIND YOUR PERSONAL BEST PEAK FLOW READING

Write down your peak flow number each day in the morning before using any of your asthma medications and again early in the afternoon before taking any of your nighttime asthma medications. Track these numbers in your diary or action plan with the date, time and any asthma symptoms you are having such as coughing, and/or wheezing. Also write down if asthma symptoms woke you up the night before and if you are having difficulty doing any of your normal daily activities.

The highest number that you have recorded over a period of 2-3 weeks when your asthma is in the best control is your personal best peak flow. This number may change over time so ask your health care provider if and when to find a new personal best.

### CALL THE CLINIC RIGHT AWAY IF...

- » **You are having trouble breathing:** if you start wheezing, coughing or have shortness of breath and have had no improvement with the use of your medications.
- » **You cannot continue your normal activities:** if you have trouble walking, talking or are not able to do your normal daily activities without having to stop a lot.
- » **Your peak flow number is dropping:** if you notice a drop in your peak flow number that does not improve after use of your rescue medication.

### SEEK EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE IF...

- » **You are struggling to breathe:** if at any time you are struggling to breathe, or your lips and nail beds turn a bluish color, you should **immediately seek emergency care!**  
**Do not drive yourself.** Call a neighbor or 911 for assistance.