

How to keep a peak flow diary

What is a peak flow?

Peak flow is a measure of how quickly you can blow air out of your lungs. It is a quick and easy test you can do yourself using a portable peak flow meter, a small plastic device.

What is a peak flow diary?

We may ask you to keep a peak flow diary. This is when you measure and write down your peak flow several times a day, every day, for a fixed period (usually 4 weeks; see below).

When you send your peak flow readings back to us, we will create a graph which tells us about your lung function in the different environments you measured it in (usually at or away from work). This can be a repetitive task, but it is a very important test which helps us to reach a diagnosis in many cases, for conditions such as occupational asthma.

How do I measure my peak flow?

We will provide you with a peak flow meter if you haven't got one, and diary sheets.



1. If safe for you to do so, always measure your peak flow whilst **standing up**.
2. **Pull the pointer (red arrow) back to the start before every blow**. Do not obstruct the pointer with your hand.
3. Take a **deep breath in**, make a **tight seal** with your mouth around the mouthpiece, then **blow as hard and fast as you can** into the meter.
4. Note which number the arrow is pointing to on the scale.
5. Do this 3 times in a row so you get 3 readings at each hour done. **Write down the highest of the 3 readings on your chart – you can round up/down to the nearest ten.**

****Measure your peak flow every 3 hours whilst awake, for 4 continuous weeks****

Remember:

- Measure your peak flow **before using any inhalers**.
- Only do measurements throughout the day/evening **whilst awake**.
- You don't need to measure at the same time each day, just **roughly every 3 hours**.
- If you forget to do a reading, leave that hour blank and do it at the next possible hour.
- **Do not miss any days**. Do measurements every single day inc. weekends/holidays.
- **Complete the sheet correctly and as much as you can every day**. This includes your working hours, any inhalers used and anything you have been exposed to.
- You can wash the mouthpiece with warm soapy water if needed – let it air dry.

How do I send my peak flow diary to you?

Please send your results to us as soon as you can, so we can analyse them before your appointment.

- **By email:** gstt.OCLDAdmin@nhs.net (preferred)
- **By WhatsApp/text message:** 07977 352 164 (preferred)
- **By post*:** Tamanna Kabir, Department of Occupational & Environmental Medicine, National Heart & Lung Institute, 1b Manresa Road, London SW3 6LR

**If posting the sheets to us, please ensure you keep a copy of the original sheets in case they get lost in the post!*