

**GLOBAL INITIATIVE FOR ASTHMA**

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# **What You And Your Family Can Do About Asthma**



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**BASED ON THE GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR ASTHMA MANAGEMENT AND PREVENTION NHLBI/WHO WORKSHOP REPORT**

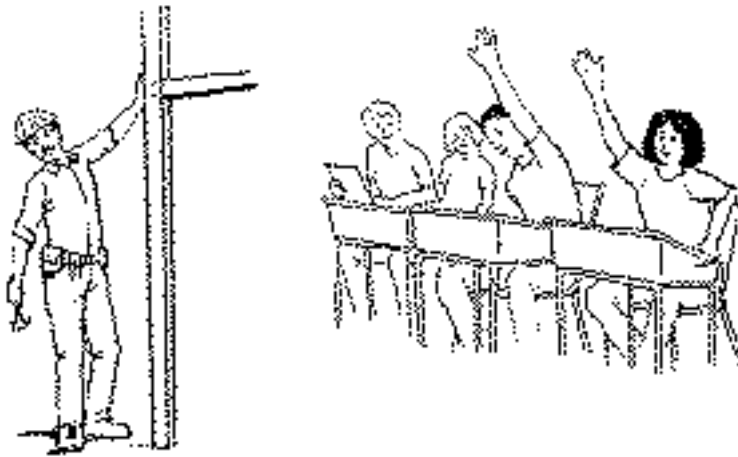
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NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH  
NATIONAL HEART, LUNG, AND BLOOD INSTITUTE

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**You can not cure asthma,  
but you can control asthma.**

People with asthma can have normal, active lives when they learn to control their asthma. They can work, play, and go to school. They can sleep well at night.



Asthma is not a cause for shame.  
All over the world, many people have asthma.

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## How to control your asthma and keep asthma attacks from starting:



1. Stay away from things that start your asthma attacks.



2. Take asthma medicines the way the doctor says to take them.



3. Go to the doctor 2 or 3 times a year for check-ups. Go even when you feel fine and have no breathing problems.

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**When you know there is asthma in the family, you may be able to keep your baby from getting asthma.**

- When you are pregnant, do not smoke.
- Keep tobacco smoke away from the baby and out of your home.
- Put a special dust-proof cover on the baby's mattress.
- Keep cats and other animals with fur out of your home.



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## People have asthma for many years.

People with asthma can have trouble breathing. They have asthma attacks that come and go.

These are signs of an asthma attack.



Tight Chest



Cough



Wheeze

Some asthma attacks are mild. Some asthma attacks get very serious. People can die from a bad asthma attack.

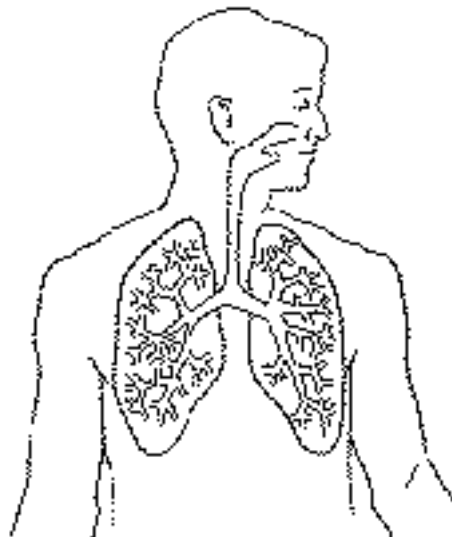


People with asthma may wake up at night because of coughing or trouble breathing.

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## **Asthma is a disease of the airways in the lungs.**

You can get asthma at any age. You can not catch asthma from other people. Many times more than one person in the same family has asthma.



Airways carry air to the lungs. Airways get smaller and smaller like branches of a tree.

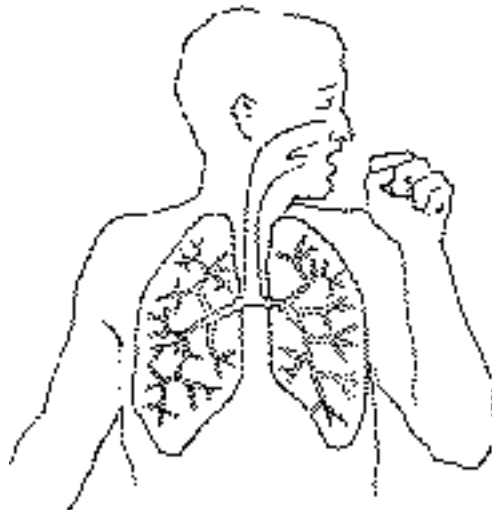
When asthma is under control, the airways are clear and air flows easily in and out.

Inside the airways, it looks like this.



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**When asthma is not under control, the sides of the airways in the lungs are always thick and swollen. An asthma attack can happen easily.**



During an asthma attack, less air can get in and out of the lungs. People cough and wheeze. The chest feels tight.

During an asthma attack, it looks like this inside the airways of the lungs.

The sides of the airways get even more swollen.

The airways get squeezed.

The airways make mucus.



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**Many things can start asthma attacks.**



Animals with fur



Cigarette smoke



Smoke



Dust in beds and pillows



Dust from sweeping



Strong smells and sprays



Pollen from trees and flowers



The weather

Colds



Running, sports, and working hard

Sometimes these things are called asthma triggers.



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**Keep things out of the home that start asthma attacks.**



- Many people with asthma are allergic to animals with fur. Keep animals outside. Give away pets.



- No smoking inside. Get help to quit smoking.



- Keep strong smells out of the home. No soap, shampoo, or lotion that smells like perfume. No incense.

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**Make special changes to the room where the person with asthma sleeps.**

- Take out rugs and carpets.  
They get dusty and moldy.
- Take out soft chairs, cushions and extra pillows.  
They collect dust.

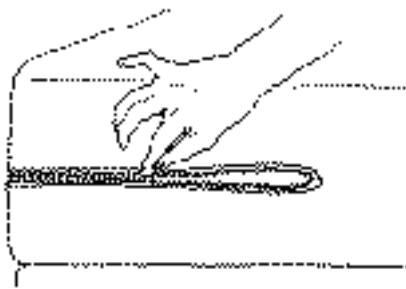


- Do not let animals on the bed or in the bedroom.
- No smoking or strong smells in the bedroom.

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## Keep the bed simple.

Dust collects in the mattress, blankets and pillows. This dust bothers most people with asthma.



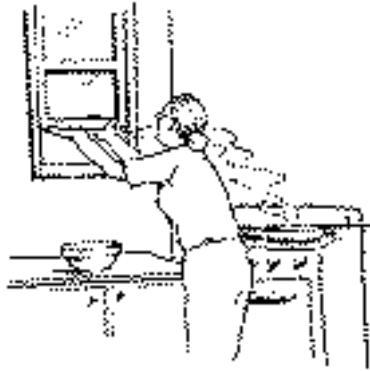
- Put special dust-proof covers with zippers on the mattress and pillow.
- Do not use a pillow or a mattress made of straw.
- A simple sleeping mat may be better than a mattress.



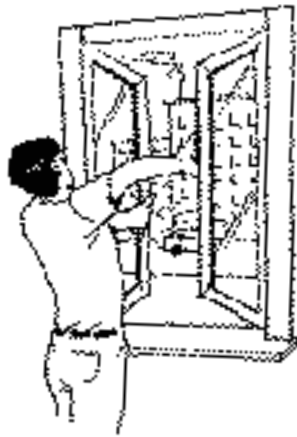
- Wash sheets and blankets often in very hot water. Put them in the sun to dry.

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**Use windows to keep the air fresh and clean.**



- Open windows wide when it is hot or stuffy, when there is smoke from cooking, and when there are strong smells.
- If you heat with wood or kerosene, keep a window open a little to get rid of fumes.



- Close windows when the air outside is full of exhaust from cars, pollution from factories, dust, or pollen from flowers and trees.

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**Plan to do these chores when the person with asthma is not there:**

- Sweep, vacuum, or dust
- Paint
- Spray for insects
- Use strong cleaners
- Cook strong smelling foods.



- Air out the house before the person with asthma returns.
- If there is no one to help, people with asthma can use a mask or scarf when they sweep or dust.

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**Most people with asthma need two kinds of asthma medicine.**



1. Everyone with asthma needs a quick-relief medicine to stop asthma attacks.

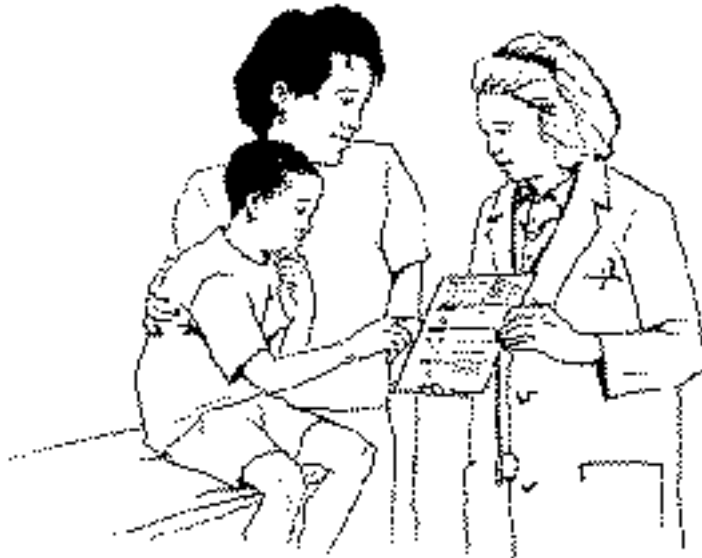


2. Many people also need a preventive medicine every day to protect the lungs and keep asthma attacks from starting.

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## **Ask the doctor to write down what asthma medicines to take and when to take them.**

- The doctor may use a medicine plan like the one in this book.
- Use the medicine plan to know what quick-relief medicines to take when you have an asthma attack.
- Use the medicine plan to help remember what preventive medicines to take every day.
- Use the medicine plan to see if you should take asthma medicine just before sports or working hard.



# Asthma Medicine Plan



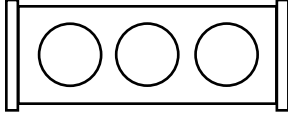
**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Doctor:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Phone for doctor or clinic: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone for taxi or friend: \_\_\_\_\_

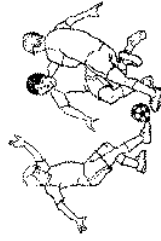
You can use the colors of a traffic light to help learn about your asthma medicines.



1. **Green** means **Go**.  
Use preventive medicine.
2. **Yellow** means **Caution**.  
Use quick-relief medicine.
3. **Red** means **Stop**.  
Get help from a doctor.

## 1. Green - Go

- Breathing is good
- No cough or wheeze
- Can work and play



Peak Flow Number  
\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Use preventive medicine.

Medicine

How much to take

When to take it

20 minutes before sports, use this medicine:

## 2. Yellow - Caution

Take quick-relief medicine to keep an asthma attack from getting bad.





Cough



Wheeze



Wake up  
at night

Peak Flow Number  
\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Medicine

How much to take

When to take it

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Red - Stop - Danger

- Medicine is not helping
- Breathing is hard and fast
- Nose opens wide
- Can't walk
- Ribs show
- Can't talk well



Peak Flow Number  
\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

### Get help from a doctor now!

Take these medicines until you talk with the doctor.

Medicine

How much to take

When to take it

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Preventive medicines for asthma are safe to use every day.**

- You can not become addicted to preventive medicines for asthma even if you use them for many years.
- Preventive medicine makes the swelling of the airways in the lungs go away.



- The doctor may tell you to take preventive medicine every day:
  - If you cough, wheeze, or have a tight chest more than once a week
  - If you wake up at night because of asthma
  - If you have many asthma attacks
  - If you have to use quick-relief medicine every day to stop asthma attacks.

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**Tell the doctor about any problems with your asthma medicines.**

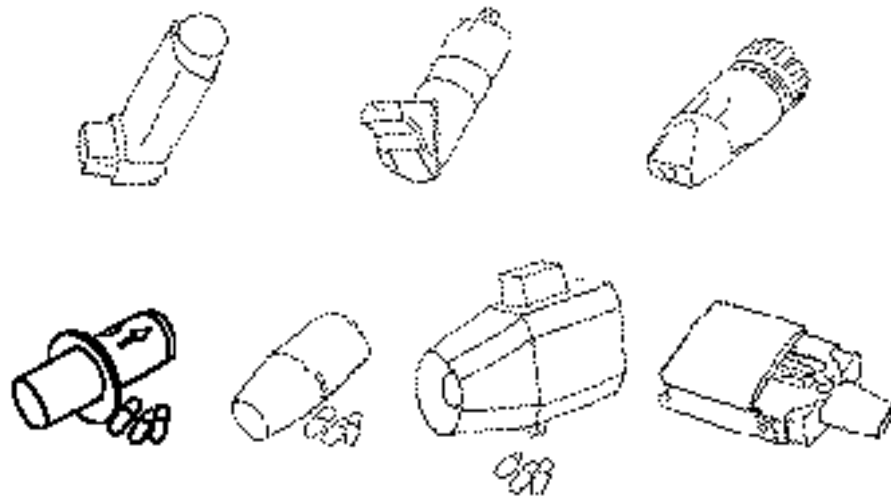


- The doctor can change the asthma medicine or change how much you take. There are many asthma medicines.
- Go to the doctor 2 or 3 times a year for check-ups so the doctor can see how well the asthma medicine works.
- Asthma may get better or it may get worse over the years. Your doctor may need to change your asthma medicines.

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**Asthma medicine can be taken in different ways.**

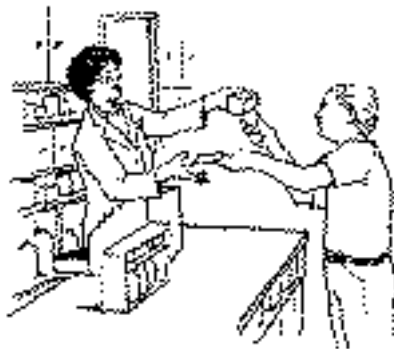
When asthma medicine is breathed in, it goes right to the airways in the lungs where it is needed. Inhalers for asthma come in many shapes. Most are sprays. Some use powder.



Asthma medicine also comes as pills and syrups.

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**Be prepared.**  
**Always have asthma medicine.**



Set aside money for asthma medicine. Buy more before you run out.



Always carry your quick-relief asthma medicine with you when you leave home.

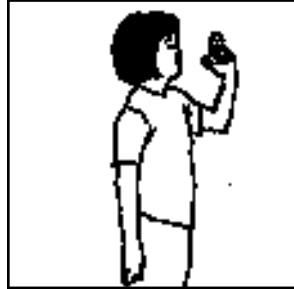
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## How to use a spray inhaler.

Remember to breathe in slowly.



1. Take off the cap.  
Shake the inhaler.



2. Stand up.  
Breathe out.



3. Put the inhaler in your mouth  
or put it just in front of your  
mouth. As you start to  
breathe in, push down on  
the top of the inhaler and  
keep breathing in slowly.



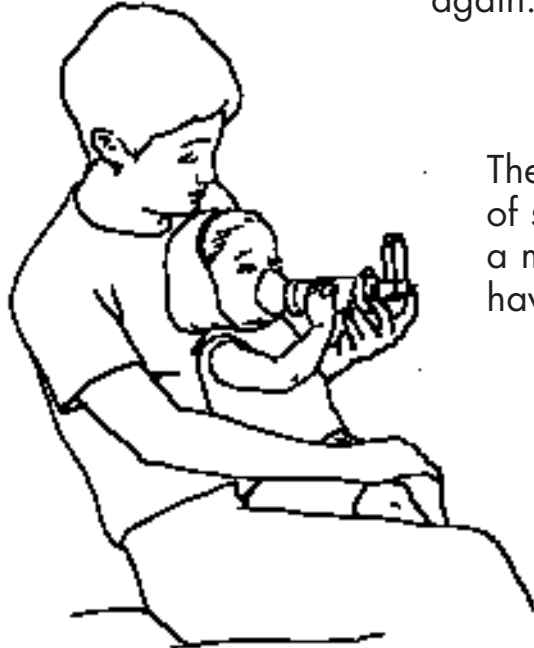
4. Hold your breath for  
10 seconds.  
Breathe out.

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**A spacer or a holding chamber makes it easier to use a spray inhaler.**



1. Spray the asthma medicine into the spacer one time.
2. Then take a deep breath and hold it for 10 seconds.
3. Breathe out into the spacer.
4. Breathe in again, but do not spray the medicine again.



There are many kinds of spacers. Some have a mouth piece. Some have a face mask.

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## Act fast if an asthma attack starts.

- Know the signs that an asthma attack is starting.



Cough



Wheeze



Tight chest



Wake up  
at night



- Move away from the thing that started the attack.



- Take a quick-relief asthma medicine.



- Stay calm for 1 hour to be sure breathing gets better.



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**Get emergency help from a doctor if you do not get better.**



Get help if you see any of these asthma danger signs:

- Your quick-relief medicine does not help for very long or it does not help at all. Breathing is still fast and hard.
- It is hard to talk.
- Lips or fingernails turn grey or blue.
- The nose opens wide when the person breathes.
- Skin is pulled in around the ribs and neck when the person breathes.
- The heartbeat or pulse is very fast.
- It is hard to walk.

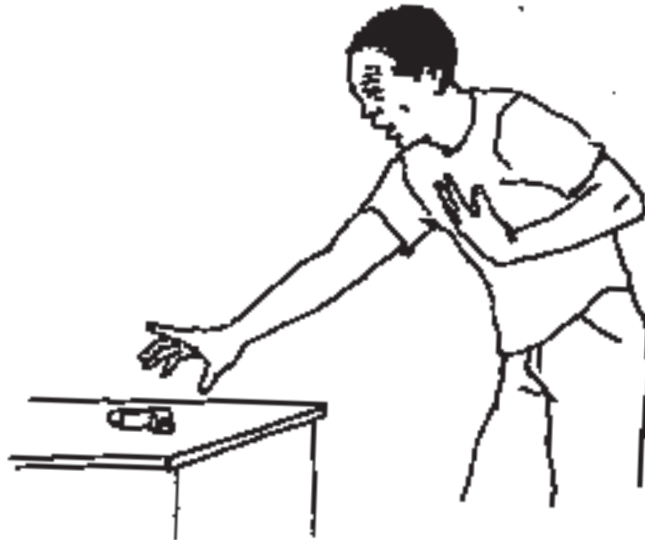


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**Be careful! Using too much quick-relief medicine for asthma attacks can hurt you.**

Quick-relief medicine for asthma makes you feel better for a little while. It may stop the attack. With some attacks, you may think you are getting better but the airways are getting more and more swollen. Then you are in danger of having a very bad asthma attack that could kill you.

- If you use quick-relief medicine every single day to stop asthma attacks, this means you need a preventive medicine for asthma.
- If you need quick-relief medicine more than 4 times in 1 day to stop asthma attacks, you need help from a doctor today.



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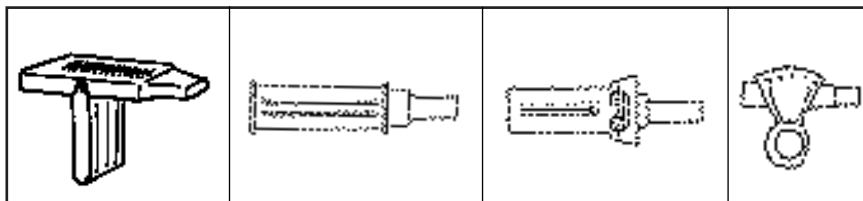
**A peak flow meter can be used at a clinic or at home to measure how well a person is breathing.**



- It helps the doctor decide if someone has asthma.
- It helps to see how bad an asthma attack is.
- It helps the doctor see how well asthma is controlled over time.

If a peak flow meter is used every day at home, people can find breathing problems even before they start to wheeze or cough. Then people know when more asthma medicine is needed.

There are many kinds of peak flow meters.



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## How to use a peak flow meter



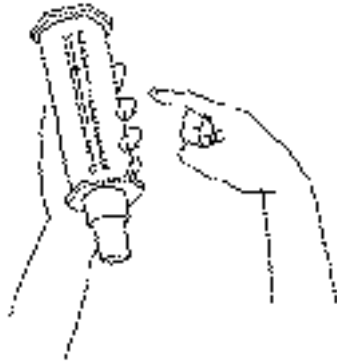
1. Slide the little marker down as far as it will go. This sets the meter to zero.



2. Stand up. Take a big breath with your mouth open. Hold the meter in one hand. Keep your fingers away from the numbers.



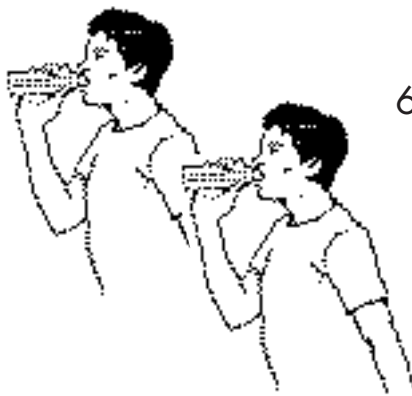
3. Quickly close your lips firmly around the tube. Do not put your tongue in the hole. Blow one time as fast and hard as you can.



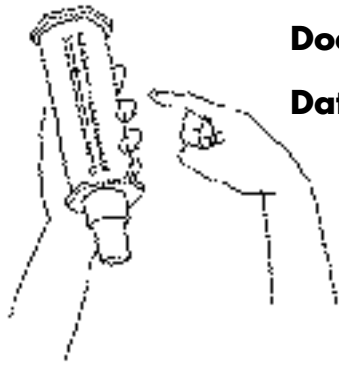
4. The marker will go up and stay up.  
Do not touch the marker.  
Find the number where the marker stopped.



5. Write the number on a piece of paper or on a chart.



6. Blow 2 more times.  
Push the button down each time.  
Write the number down each time.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Sample Day**

**Day 1**

**Day 2**

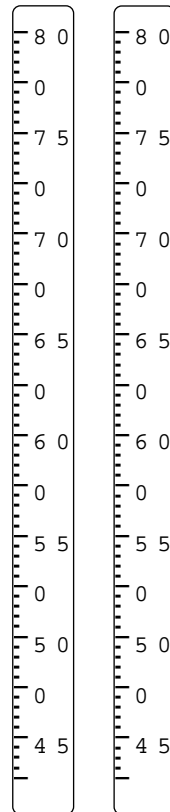
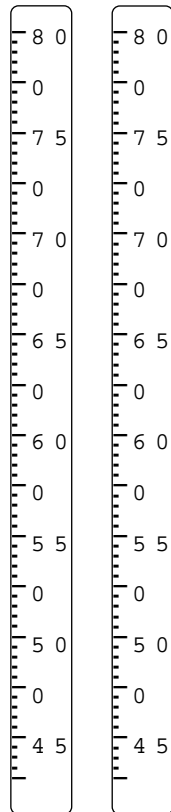
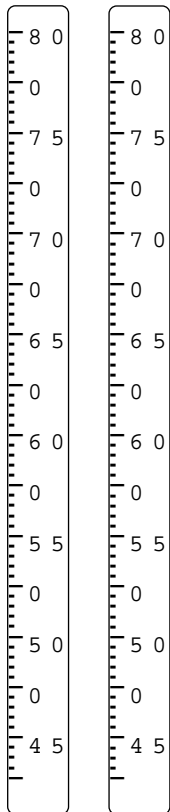
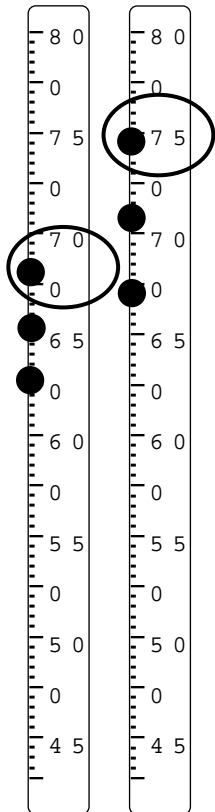
**Day 3**

morning evening

morning evening

morning evening

morning evening



## How to use a peak flow chart at home.



1. Find your peak flow number in the morning and evening.
2. Each morning and each evening blow 3 times.
3. After each blow, mark the spot where the marker stopped.
4. Put the meter next to the peak flow chart to help you find the spot to mark.
5. Circle the highest of the 3 numbers. That is your peak flow number.

Day 4		Day 5		Day 6		Day 7	
morning	evening	morning	evening	morning	evening	morning	evening