Pulmonary Function Tests

A pulmonary function test measures how well you move air in and out of your lungs. There are a number of tests that can be done. The most often the measurement used is the peak flow test. This test can also be used at home. Examples of these include the Tru Zone, Astech, Mini Wright, and Spir-O-Flow meters.

Measuring how well air moves out of your lung can be used as a reliable guide to treatment, even if you have no symptoms. Normal values of peak flow rates depend on your age, height, and sex. If your peak flow measurement is lower than normal, treatment with inhaled medicines can be started to prevent a more serious episode of asthma or emphysema. You should measure your peak flows daily in the morning, and more often throughout the day if you have any symptoms such as shortness of breath or cough. **Keep a record of your peak flow results to review with your caregiver**. The mouth piece of your peak flow meter should be washed with soap and water once a week. Otherwise it does not need special care.

To measure your peak flow, proper technique is very important. Follow the instructions that accompany your meter. Usually you must set the indicator to 0, take a deep breath, and blow as quickly and forcefully as possible into the meter. Reset the meter and repeat the measurement twice; record your best result. If your test results put you in the "green" zone, this means your ability to move air is 80-100% of normal. No special treatment may be needed. If your test puts you in the "yellow" zone, you are between 50 and 80% of normal. Treatment should be started. **Results in the "red" zone mean you are below 50% of normal and you should initiate treatment and call your caregiver right away**.

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