

Patient Information

What difference does it make to me as a patient?

During 2004, there will be some changes to the peak flow meters that are recommended to patients to help monitor the condition of their airways. The U.K and other countries in Europe will start using a new 'Standard' for peak expiratory flow (P.E.F.), to ensure that the best possible treatment decisions can be made for each patient.

The change has occurred because scientists and asthma specialists have found better ways of measuring the speed of air that comes out of your lungs when you take a peak flow measurement. The new 'Standard' will result in small improvements to the accuracy of the meters that have been used, and are being implemented by all the top companies who manufacture this type of medical device. By the end of 2004, all new peak flow meters given to patients will be of the new type (referred to as the new 'EU' scale or 'EN 13826').

These new peak flow meters, manufactured during 2004, will be slightly different to those from 2003 and before - the following section may help answer any questions you have, and your Doctor or Asthma Specialist can reassure you if you have any concerns.

What difference will I see?

The new peak flow meters will have a similar appearance to the old meters, but the scale (the part of the meter that you read your PEF value from) will have changed.

If you have a Mini-Wright, the scale will be different colour - blue text printed on a yellow background. Apart from the scale, the new meter will behave and handle as reliably as the old meter.



Old version scale
(White text on black
background)



New version scale
(Blue text on
yellow background)



The Mini Wright Standard Range Peak Flow Meter, showing the scale and pointer of old and new versions

Are the readings the same?

No - a PEF reading from a new 'EU' scale meter will be different to a reading taken on an old meter, even if your lung function has remained the same. This is because the way the air speed is measured has been changed. For example, achieving 500 L/min on a new scale 'EU' Mini-Wright is the same as blowing 536 on an old 'Wright-scale' meter!

I keep a peak flow diary, and have been given a new meter - do I have to start again?

Not necessarily. As long as you keep a note of which PEF readings came from which meter, then you can convert from the 'old' scale into the 'new' by using our online converter. Keep your old Diary to hand, and convert your recent readings to give you an idea of what the last week would have been like if you had used a new 'EU' scale meter for all of the time.

After a few weeks, you will have continued your Diary, with all recent readings from the new peak flow meter. If ever you need to refer to your old Diary, just remember to convert the reading.

Do I need to replace the old-scale meter immediately?

No. Your existing Mini-Wright is one of the most reliable medical instruments available, but meters that are older than

three years, or ones that have been damaged in any way should be replaced with a new 'EU' scale Mini-Wright to ensure your lung function is monitored accurately.

In the U.K., old-scale P.E.F. meters will no longer be available on prescription after 2004. EU-scale meters will be replacing them from September 1st 2004.

The next time you see your asthma specialist or Doctor, discuss the need to update your peak flow meter with them. They may also need to update their peak flow meter, and it would be sensible for them and you to have meters that both read in the same way, so that your PEF readings in the Doctor's office can be compared to those achieved at home.

My Doctor's/Nurse's peak flow meter is different to mine. Will that make a difference?

It may be that your Doctor has a different 'brand' of peak flow meter, as there are several companies that manufacture these devices. As there are small differences between brands, it is worth remembering that unless you and your Doctor have the same meter, there will be small differences between readings. The most important thing to do is to make sure both you and they are using the same 'scale' meter. If both you and your Doctor have Mini-Wrights, but one is the old 'Wright' scale, and the other a new 'EU' scale, then convert one of the readings using our online converter.

Will my 'best ever'/maximum P.E.F. reading change?

Yes - 'EU' scale meters measure airflow differently, so your maximum peak flow reading will be different. By keeping a Diary of your readings when you are well, you can note a new personal best reading from your new meter. As only the scale on the Mini-Wright has been updated, you can quickly generate your new 'EU' scale equivalent to your 'best ever' reading, even though it came from your old peak flow meter.

I use a low range meter - why does it not have 'EN 13826' on it?

The scientists who devised the new standard for peak flow meters believed that if the 'standard range' peak flow meter could be made more accurate, there would be no need for a 'low range' meter. Therefore, unfortunately, any 'low range' peak flow meter is technically unable to meet every test in the standard - in the case of Mini-Wright Low Range, the only test that the meter would fail is its ability to measure right up to 800 L/min! As the Mini-Wright Low Range meter only measures between 30 and 400 l/min, this meter cannot officially be marked as 'EN 13826 compliant', but it will display the 'EU' symbol to help with recognition. A concession by the U.K. Government's authorities will ensure that health professionals can still prescribe a low range meter for children, the elderly and those with severe asthma. The situation in other countries in Europe remains unclear, but Clement Clarke will make the Low Range Mini-Wright meter available to all who request it.

I have been prescribed a peak flow meter, and I can't tell what type it is?

1. Look at the meter and its instruction leaflet. Often there is a description of the meter and who manufactured it.
2. Check its features against the information on Mini-Wright on display at www.peakflow.com.
3. Ask the person who supplied your peak flow meter, what scale it is, and who manufactured it.

Note 1. During 2004, countries across Europe will be introducing the new 'EU' Scale meter, which will have full details of the type of meter, and the company who manufactured it included. Meters that do not have this detail are not compliant with the new Standard, and therefore may not be able to monitor lung function accurately.

Note 2. From January 1st 2005, all meters sold in Europe should comply with the new 'EU' Standard 'EN 13826). If you have been provided with a meter that does not state 'EN 13826' on its packaging or on the meter itself, discuss whether you should use it with your health professional.

What other information is available?

Further information is available from our website www.peakflow.com. This includes an online scale reading converter and a guide to the different types of Mini-Wright peak flow meter currently available.

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