

10 Tips for Buying a Spirometer



A good spirometer is one of the best physician office investments available. If you are among the thousands of physicians who are beginning to incorporate spirometry into their practice or are looking for a more efficient and cost effective spirometer, the following tips will help determine the best spirometer for your needs.

IMPORTANT: If you expect to get reimbursed by Medicare or private insurers, make sure the spirometer you are considering qualifies as such. Spirometers that provide the FEV6 measurement in place of the FVC measurement, and those that don't include graphs in the printout do not qualify for reimbursement under the Medicare descriptor for spirometry.

Tip 1: Don't buy the cheapest spirometer you can find. Remember, this is an investment. The adage "you get what you pay for" definitely applies to spirometers. The average price for a good spirometer is about \$1,400 - \$2,000. The lower the cost, the lower the performance and ease-of-use. A good spirometer should last you 10 years (there are still Jones spirometers in the field that are over 50 years old!), and can pay for itself in weeks. Spending a little more for a quality spirometer is a smart investment.

Tip 2: Don't buy a digital peak flow meter (PFM) thinking you can use it in place of a spirometer. PFM's are monitoring devices for patients to use once they have been diagnosed with asthma. Spirometers are diagnostic devices used by medical professionals to diagnose and manage pulmonary diseases. The NIH Asthma Guidelines make this clear. Spirometry is more accurate and provides an interpretation, graphics, better data, and a printout. Spirometry is also reimbursable and follows the practice guidelines for asthma and COPD.

Tip 3: Only buy a spirometer from an established manufacturer. Spirometer companies tend to come and go. The longer the spirometry company has been in business, the better the chance they'll be around during the life of the spirometer. Also, because many spirometers are from off-shore manufacturers, ask about their repair policy. Their US operation may simply be a rented store front with limited repair capacity, if any. When your spirometer has a problem and you send it in for repair, they may send you a refurbished replacement, in place of your own spirometer! Jones spirometers are designed, manufactured, and supported in the USA.

Tip 4: Call the spirometry manufacturer. This is especially true if you're buying from a dealer or distributor. If you can't get a live person on the phone immediately to answer your questions or you get placed into somebody's voicemail box, reconsider. That's the kind of service you can expect when you're in the process of testing a patient and you need immediate support.

Tip 5: Buy a spirometer that uses a disposable sensor. The newest spirometry technology utilizes disposable sensors which minimize sterilization hassles and avoids the high cost of filters. Disposable sensors essentially allow you to throw out the measuring system after each patient. Avoid spirometers with tubing which will require sterilization.

Tip 6: Consider disposable costs. You shouldn't have to pay more than \$1.50 per sensor or filter, but some manufacturers charge \$2 - 4 each. This can add thousands to your disposable costs every year. This very important consideration is often overlooked by many physician's offices who only consider the actual spirometer cost. Our disposable sensors are the least expensive on the market, costing between \$.99 - 1.29 each depending on the quantity ordered.

Tip 7: Buy from a dealer who can provide product training or from a manufacturer that offers video training on their website. General spirometry training in addition to product training is important for acquiring quality test data. Online video training is especially useful because it allows you and your staff to go back for additional training as often as necessary at a time that is convenient for you. Our website training video is available 24-7-365!

Tip 8: Buy a portable spirometer. Portable spirometers that aren't tethered by a power cord or tubing are more convenient. They allow you to take the spirometer to the patient rather than dragging the patient down the hall to a stationary spirometer. It's more efficient for your practice and easier for your patients.

Tip 9: Consider your printout options. Be cautious of spirometers that require an external printer. The printer driver software is coded into the spirometer. The lifecycle of inexpensive printers is about 12 months before it becomes obsolete. If the printer breaks you will have to replace it with the current model. The problem is, the spirometer doesn't support the current printer so you will have to send your spirometer to the factory. If the software upgrade is available, it will be expensive and limit you to specific printers. If they don't offer the software upgrade, you'll have to buy a new spirometer. With the Satellite/Base Station or Satellite Plus you will never have that problem.

Tip 10: Buy a spirometer that's easy to use. This tip may be the most important. We can't stress enough the importance of this advice. The most common reason for the underutilization of a spirometer in a physician's office is due to product ease-of-use issues. There is a correlation between spirometer cost and ease-of-use. Cheaper spirometers are usually harder to operate because they have small displays and limited keys which dramatically slow down data entry, data review, and report generation.

Bonus Tip: Get buy-in from your staff. They are going to be performing the test on your patients, and if you are just adding spirometry to your protocol, you are also giving them another responsibility. Make sure they understand that spirometry testing is effort dependent and that you are counting on them to provide you with quality results. Reassure them that spirometry testing is simple and can be performed in as little as 5 minutes. Let them know that you have done your research and purchased a high quality, easy-to-use, maintenance-free spirometer from a leading manufacturer. They will receive either hands-on or video training and will have immediate access to technical support.

Extra Tip: Don't buy a spirometer from your EMR vendor. Why? You wouldn't buy a plasma TV from a car salesman, so why would you buy a diagnostic pulmonary device from an IT person? Who is going to train your staff and provide technical support? You might as well ask the car salesman, because the IT person doesn't have any idea. And, don't believe the EMR vendor that tells you only one or two spirometers are compatible with their software. The truth is those are the only two spirometry companies that would give the EMR vendor distribution rights to their products.

Conclusion: Spirometry testing is simple. You should be able to turn on your spirometer, run your test, and get on with your day. You and your staff are extremely busy. Avoid cheap, inefficient spirometers that will ruin your confidence and productivity. The Jones Satellite/Base Station provides the fastest test speed, the fastest print speed, and the lowest cost per test. That's why in 2006 more primary care physicians were introduced to spirometry with the Satellite/Base Station than any other spirometer.



SPIROMETRY STARTS HERE®

Jones Medical Instrument Company
200 Windsor Drive, Oak Brook, IL 60523
(800) 323-7336 • www.jonesmedical.com