

A fun and compact spirometer

EQUIPMENT REVIEW

The MicroLab Spirometer leaves other models standing, says **Dr Jane Barnard**

Our surgery has a rather archaic spirometer, so we quickly realised what we were missing when this little beauty arrived.

The MicroLab desktop spirometer is neat, compact, lightweight, and has a state-of-the-art, PDA-style, high-resolution colour screen and easy-to-follow menu.

It works with infrared and a digital volume transducer. This basically means that troublesome environmental factors such as humidity and temperature, which can cause inaccuracy in older models, do not affect this machine.

It also means that calibrating it is much more straightforward. There are several ways of doing this; by far the easiest is taking an initial spirometer reading as soon as the spirom-

eter arrives from a member of staff with no known respiratory problems, and then regular repeats to ensure the same readings each time.

The alternative is a simple calibration using a three-litre syringe and the built-in calibration check. No further routine maintenance is required.



The MicroLab Spirometer features a PDA-style colour touch screen

Deal of the week

Model: MicroLab Mk8 Spirometer
Price: £1,521.63 incl VAT
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The spirometer comes in a carry case and can be mains-run or battery-run for about four hours before re-charging.

More than 2,000 patients' results can be recorded, and you can create a database using patient numbers, name, age and personal details, and so bring up patients who are being seen in a particular clinic.

The MicroLab can save patients' previous recordings, and also allows for two pre- and post- recordings, enabling use not only for pre- and post-bronchodilator but also pre- and post-steroid if required.

Bubblegum feature

The bubblegum feature is great for encouraging patients who are not particular good at the forced spirometry. It works by taking into account the patient's relaxed spirometer reading and their personal details, and then estimates their forced spirometry potential. The bubble blows up on the screen while the patient is puffing, and if they reach their potential, the bubble will burst. It is designed for children, but most adults will also enjoy the challenge.

Another popular feature is the lung age, which may be useful with those smokers as a further incentive to quit.

You can use the built-in printer to print the result. Otherwise there is software available to allow for uploading the test results to a PC or downloading patient details to the MicroLab machine rather than manually entering them.

We tested the MicroLab Mk8 in one of our COPD clinics. Set-up was quick and easy, and we could load the list of patients and their details into the machine before the clinic started. The settings allow you to customise the spirometer so you are not overwhelmed with unwanted figures.

The MicroLab is cleverly designed to be suitable for GP surgeries; it certainly went down a storm at ours. It was easy to use and the patients enjoyed using the bubble encouragement feature, so, if you are thinking of buying a spirometer, look no further.

● An independent review by Dr Barnard, a GP in Yatley, Hampshire