

Vaccine Management: Storage and Handling

It is essential to store and handle vaccines correctly. "Failure to adhere to recommended specifications for storage and handling of immunobiologics can reduce their potency, resulting in an inadequate immune response in the recipient. Vaccine quality is the shared responsibility of all handlers of vaccines from the time a vaccine is manufactured until administration."* These guidelines can help assure vaccines are stored and handled properly.

- ♦ **Assign vaccine management responsibilities to a lead person and a back-up person.**
- ♦ **Develop a written plan of vaccine management including:**

1. Inspection and documentation of vaccine shipments.

- Ensure that vaccines are delivered during office hours
- Store vaccines at the recommended temperatures IMMEDIATELY upon arrival
- Examine the vaccines on arrival:
 - Check package contents with packing slip
- Check enclosed refrigerator & freezer temperature indicators
- Check shipment date
- Interval between shipment date and arrival at your office should be no more than 48 hours
- If you have any questions about whether any vaccines have been transported properly contact
 - The vaccine manufacturers (privately purchased vaccines)
 - The local health department (VFC vaccine)

2. Monitor and document everyday vaccine storage and handling.

- Keep certified thermometers in both the refrigerator and freezer.
 - **Refrigerator** temperatures should be between **35°- 46° F (2°-8° C)**.
 - **Freezer** temperature should be at **5° F (-15° C) or below**.
- Check refrigerator and freezer temperatures **twice a day**:
 1. when the clinic opens
 2. before the clinic closes
- Document temperatures in both the refrigerator and freezer on a temperature log. Post the temperature logs and MDCH guidelines for storage and handling on the refrigerator.
- Keep vaccines in the original box until time to use it
- Clearly label the space where each vaccine is stored
 1. Exposure to light may effect the potency of vaccines
 2. Decreases the potential for medication errors
- Check expiration dates monthly. Rotate vaccine stock so the oldest vaccine is used first.

3. Develop a written emergency plan for compromised vaccine including procedures for vaccine relocation in the event of a power failure or mechanical difficulty.

- Designate personnel 24-hour access to where the vaccines are stored.
- Set up a system to notify you during power outages.
- Identify steps to assure proper storage and handling of vaccines during an emergency.
- Identify an alternate power source (generator) if your clinic does not have one or alternate storage units or facilities (nearby hospital, pharmacy, other provider's office.) Identify procedures that allow access to alternate facilities.
- Keep a cooler in the office; place a copy of the Emergency Response Plan Worksheet in the cooler.
- Follow and complete the Emergency Response Plan and Worksheet.
- DO NOT automatically discard the vaccine that has been compromised.
- Mark exposed vaccine and store separately from undamaged vaccines; storing appropriately in a refrigerator/freezer.
- Call vaccine manufacturers and/or your local health department for further instructions.

4. COMMUNICATE YOUR VACCINE MANAGEMENT PLAN TO ALL STAFF

Michigan Department
of Community Health



Jennifer M. Granholm, Governor
Janet Olszewski, Director

*The General Recommendations of Immunizations: Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), MMWR, December 11, 2006, Vol.55, No. RR-15