



Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center

DEPARTMENT OF NURSING

CLINICAL

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

SUBJECT: REFRIGERATOR AND FREEZER SAFETY AND
MAINTENANCE

Policy No.: C154
Effective Date: 02/1994
Page: 1 of 3

Purpose of Procedure:

To ensure:

- Proper functioning, cleanliness, and maintenance of refrigerators and freezers on the nursing units
- Potency of refrigerated medications
- Safety of food and food items.

Performed By: The Charge Nurse or designee

Policy Statements

1. Refrigerators/ freezers will only be used for their designated purpose:
 - a. **Patient Nourishment Refrigerator/Freezer** – only food items supplied by the Dietary Department will be stored in this refrigerator/freezer (Managed by Dietary. See HACCP Manual)
 - b. **Patients' Personal Food Refrigerator/Freezer** – only perishable food brought by visitors will be stored in the patients' refrigerator and labeled with the Patient's name and date. Food will be kept for a maximum of three days. No perishable food items will be stored at the patient's bedside.
Key Point: Food items that have been inside an isolation room will not be stored in the Patient's Personal Food Refrigerator/Freezer.
 - c. **Staff Refrigerator/Freezer** – intended to store employees' food for their own nourishment
 - d. **Medication Refrigerators** – intended to store only medications requiring refrigeration as directed by Pharmacy.
Key Point: All vaccines and other refrigerated medication will be stored in the medication refrigerator once received from Pharmacy.
2. The temperature should be read during a stable period and not when the refrigerator or freezer has been opened recently.
3. Each refrigerator and freezer will have its own thermometer.
4. The refrigerator/freezer logs (RFL) and medication refrigerator log (MRL) for each refrigerator or refrigerator/ freezer is kept in a designated location in proximity to the appliance on each unit. See Attachments:
 - a. *Attachment 1 - Patient Food (Personal) Refrigerator/Freezer Log (Patient RFL)*
 - b. *Attachment 2 – Nursing Staff Refrigerator/Freezer Log (Staff RFL)*
 - c. *Attachment 3 - Medication Refrigerator Log (MRL)*
5. Completed logs will be kept on each unit for three years or for the duration of each Licensing and Accreditation cycle (see Nursing Policy A160 – *Records Retention*).
6. The medication refrigerators are plugged into the red emergency outlets to ensure no interruption of electrical service and adequate temperature control.

APPROVED BY: Nursing Executive Council
03/2022

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7. All refrigerators are checked for electrical/mechanical safety on an annual basis by Bio Medical Engineering Services.
8. Refrigerators in areas that cannot be monitored daily utilize a designated device that provides feedback if temperatures are not maintained within the control limits.

Procedure

1. Use a separate log for each appliance. Record time, initials, and temperatures on the designated date on the appropriate log. Initial and sign name at the bottom of the Refrigerator/Freezer Logs (RFL) and the Medication Refrigerator Log (MRL).
2. Record any problems or temperature discrepancies, such as temperatures that are out of the acceptable range, on the RFL under the comments section. Report problems or discrepancies to Facilities Management immediately and record resolution on the RFL and take appropriate actions (see Temperatures Outside the Acceptable Range, below).

Refrigerator	Frequency of Temperature Check	Temperature Check Performed By	Acceptable Temperature Range (F: Fahrenheit; C: Celsius)	Frequency of Cleaning	Cleaning Performed By
Patients' Personal Food	Daily	Nursing Staff	45 degrees F or below 7 degrees C or below Freezer 0 degrees F or -18 degrees C	Every 3 Days	Outside: EVS Inside: Nursing/EVS*
Staff	Daily	Nursing Staff	45 degrees F or below 7 degrees C or below Freezer 0 degrees F or -18 degrees C	Weekly	Outside: EVS Inside: Nursing/EVS*
Medication	Twice/Day	Licensed Staff	36-46 degrees F 2-8 degrees C	Weekly	Licensed Staff

3. Temperatures Outside the Acceptable Range

- a. When a temperature registers outside the acceptable range, **take immediate action.**
- b. Contact Facilities Management for immediate adjustment or replacement, if necessary.
- c. If immediate resolution is not possible, the unit Nurse Manager or designee will do one of the following options:
 1. Obtain a temporary or permanent replacement from Facilities Management. Document the temperature of the temporary or replacement appliance.
 2. If a temporary or replacement appliance is not readily available:
 - a. *For medication refrigerators:*
 - Transfer refrigerated medications to the refrigerator of a nearby inpatient unit
 - Return medications to the Pharmacy Department

Key Point: Medications not maintained in the proper temperature setting or range for an unknown period of time will be returned to the Pharmacy for disposal.

b. For refrigerators/freezers designed to store food:

- Transfer refrigerated or frozen food to the refrigerator or freezer of a nearby inpatient unit

Key Point: Food not maintained in the proper temperature setting or range for an unknown period of time will be thrown away.

4. **Temperature Checks Immediately Following Unsupervised Time**

- a. Check the temperature monitoring device before using any food item or medications on the first day the department reopens to determine if temperatures are out of the expected parameters.
- b. On the MRL or RFL, place an “X” in the refrigerator or refrigerator/freezer temperature columns for each day not monitored and initial in the appropriate column. Under the comments section, document “Unsupervised period of time from _____(date/time) to _____(date/time).”
- c. Document under the comments section that after an unsupervised time from _____(date/time) to _____(date/time), the monitoring device indicates that:
 - The temperature was maintained within normal limits, or
 - The temperature monitoring device indicates a temperature outside of the control limits (then follow instructions under “*Temperatures Outside the Acceptable Range*”)

5. **Cleaning**

- a. Use soap and water to clean the interior. Follow with a clean wet cloth, then a dry cloth.
- b. Initial on the appropriate date on the appropriate log, under the column (weekly) cleaning.
Key Point: EVS will clean the interior of the refrigerators listed in the table, upon request by the nursing staff. Nursing is responsible to discard old or undated food.

Revised by: Bincy Mathew, MSN, RN, CMSRN

References:

California Code of Regulations, Title XXII. (2018). *Pharmaceutical Service General Requirements*. 70263.q6

California Code of Regulations, Title XXII. (2018). *Dietetic Service General Requirements*. 70273. k3.

Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center. (July 2020). Record Retention – A160.

02/94 – New
03/97 – Revised
07/00 – Reviewed
12/02 – Revised
02/06 – Revised
12/12 – Revised
11/15 – Revised
12/18 – Revised
12/21- Revised

PATIENT FOOD (PERSONAL) REFRIGERATOR/FREEZER LOG (PATIENT RFL)

Policy C154 Attachment 1

LOCATION: _____ UNIT: _____ MONTH/YEAR: _____

STANDARD TEMPERATURES: **REFRIGERATOR** 45°F or below OR 7° C or below
 FREEZER -18°C, 0° F OR BELOW

Report Any Nonstandard Temperatures to FACILITIES MANAGEMENT and Document Corrective Action Taken

MONTH	REFRIGERATOR			FREEZER			CLEANING (weekly)	COMMENTS / DISCREPANCIES / OTHER PROBLEMS ACTION TAKEN FOR TEMPERATURES OUT SIDE THE ACCEPTABLE RANGE
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Init	Signature	Init	Signature	Init	Signature

MEDICATION REFRIGERATOR LOG (MRL)

Policy C154 Attachment 3

LOCATION: _____ UNIT: _____ MONTH/YEAR: _____

STANDARD TEMPERATURES: *REFRIGERATOR* 36° to 46° F OR 2° to 8° C

MONTH	REFRIGERATOR AM			REFRIGERATOR PM			CLEANING (weekly)	Report Nonstandard Temperatures To Facilities Management & Document Corrective Action	
DAY of Month	TIME	TEMP	INIT.	TIME	TEMP	INIT.	INIT.	COMMENTS / DISCREPANCIES / OTHER PROBLEMS ACTION TAKEN FOR TEMPERATURES OUTSIDE THE ACCEPTABLE RANGE	
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