

VALLEYCARE
OLIVE VIEW-UCLA MEDICAL CENTER/HEALTH CENTERS
POLICY & PROCEDURE

NUMBER: 3621
VERSION: 1

SUBJECT/TITLE: **VACCINE STORAGE AND HANDLING, GENERAL HOSPITAL GUIDELINES**

POLICY: The OVMC Pharmacy Department defines procedures for the safe storage and handling of vaccines.

PURPOSE: This policy provides guidelines for proper storage and handling of vaccines.

DEPARTMENTS: All Clinical Departments

DEFINITIONS:

PROCEDURE:

- I. Ordering and accepting vaccine deliveries
 - A. Ordering vaccines
 1. A pharmacy supervisor directs the ordering of vaccines based on patient needs and current stock. The ordering pharmacy supervisor serves as the vaccine coordinator for the hospital.
 2. Nurses order approved floor-stock vaccines from the Inpatient Pharmacy.
 - B. Overseeing proper receipt and storage of vaccine shipments
 1. A pharmacist signs for receipt of vaccines and verifies correct quantity and proper shipping temperature.
 2. A pharmacy helper records the receipt of the vaccine(s) in the Vaccine Log with the required information.
 3. A pharmacy helper or technician stores the vaccine in the appropriately labeled bin.
 4. An assigned nurse shall check appropriate storage in his/her care area.
- II. Storing and handling vaccines
 - A. Organizing vaccines within the storage unit(s)
 1. Store vaccines away from the cold air outlet from the freezer to the refrigerator (located in separate compartment).
 2. If possible, keep the vials and single-dose syringes in the original manufacture boxes.
 3. Do not store vaccines in the doors, vegetable bins, or against the walls of the refrigerator/freezer.

B. Refrigerator and freezer checks

1. Refrigerator/ freezers which are used to store vaccines shall be checked twice a day – at the beginning of the shift and in the second half of the time of operation.
 - a. Vaccine Temperatures Guidelines
 - i. **Refrigerator:** 35°- 46° F (2° - 8°C); Optimum 40° F (5° C)
 - ii. **Freezer:** 5°F (-15°C) or colder; Optimum 0° F (20° C)
2. In the pharmacy areas, the assigned technicians check the storage units for proper drug storage and air circulation while checking temperature. Store vaccines in their original boxes, protect vaccines from light.
3. A freezer electronic thermometer and a freezer log must be in use if the freezer is used for medication/vaccine storage.
4. A nurse must contact Biomedical Services if an electronic thermometer is needed and start a log sheet.
5. The temperature history on electronic monitors must be checked and cleared prior to recording current temperature in the log. The assigned nurses or pharmacy technicians are responsible for checking and clearing the temperature history in their respective areas.
6. Temperature log sheets must be kept for at least a 3 years by the unit or clinic nursing manager, and in pharmacy, the assigned pharmacy supervisor(s).
7. Biomedical Services will provide electronic thermometer calibration under general maintenance.
8. Notify the pharmacy supervisor and Facilities immediately if history or current refrigerator/freezer temperature is observed out of range.

C. General refrigerator and freezer guidelines

1. Plug the refrigerator into an outlet where it cannot be accidentally disconnected. Emergency outlets are preferred.
2. Food or laboratory specimens shall not be stored in the refrigerator/freezer used for vaccines.
3. To minimize temperature fluctuations, if possible, place several water bottles labeled “DO NOT DRINK” in the doors of the refrigerator and freezer. Ice packs can also be stored in the freezer.
4. Dormitory-style refrigerators are unreliable and shall not be used.

III. Managing inventory

- A. The pharmacy procurement technicians rotate stock in the pharmacy so that vaccines closest to its expiration date will be used first.

- B. Nurses shall rotate their stock if vaccines with varying expirations are stored.
- C. **Do not dispense or administer an expired vaccine.** Return expired products to pharmacy. Expired products must be segregated in the pharmacy expiration area for processing.
- D. If an in-date refrigerated vaccine must be returned to the pharmacy, the nurse will place it in the return bag in the unit refrigerator. Frozen vaccines must be returned directly to the pharmacy.
- E. Pharmacy helpers and nursing staff conduct a vaccine physical inventory, in their respective areas, on a monthly basis (more frequent if necessary), or prior to placing a vaccine order.
- F. Pharmacy may transfer vaccines due to expire within 60 days to another facility with the permission of the Los Angeles county Immunization Program (LACIP). Contact the LACIP AFU to arrange transfer of vaccines, complete the Vaccine Transfer form and electronically transfer vaccines on the California Immunization Registry (CAIR). Proper temperature control must be maintained if vaccines are transferred.

IV. Managing potentially compromised vaccines

- A. If at any time it is discovered that stored vaccines have been exposed to temperatures outside the recommended ranges, these vaccines should remain properly stored, but segregated and marked “DO NOT USE” until guidance can be obtained.
- B. Contact the inpatient pharmacy supervisor or pharmacist in charge for recommendations and notify Facilities of storage unit problems.
- C. An assigned pharmacist will contact the local or state immunization program, vaccine manufacturer(s), or both for appropriate actions or guidelines that should be followed for all potentially compromised vaccines.

V. Back-up storage for vaccines in event of unit malfunction or power outage.

- A. Notify the pharmacy supervisor or pharmacist-in-charge and Facilities Department immediately.
- B. In the event of a unit malfunction, vaccines in clinics or inpatient care areas will be transferred to an acceptable vaccine storage unit in an adjacent care area.
- C. If a power outage occurs, move vaccines to an assigned storage unit that is connected to emergency power.
- D. Follow “Managing potentially compromised vaccines” guidelines above.
- E. Assigned personnel in the area will document the event and the action taken in the Patient Safety Net System.

VI. Pharmacy packaging vaccines for transport to another facility**

- A. Place ice or gel packs inside the cooler. Place a temperature monitor in the cooler to determine if temperature is in the recommended range.
- B. Place a barrier (e.g., shredded paper) at the bottom of the container so vaccines will not be resting directly on the packs.
- C. Vaccine not tolerant of freezing temperatures should be packed farther away from the ice packs.
- D. Contents should be packed as follows: ice/gel packs, barrier, vaccines in their original packing, temperature monitor, another layer of barrier, and ice/gel packs.

****Varicella containing vaccines will not be transferred. CDC strongly discourages transport of varicella-containing vaccines.**

VII. Education

- A. The supervisor in affected care area(s) is responsible for educating staff on the details of this policy.

References: CDC Vaccine Storage & Handling Guide, 2011	
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