Transporting Frozen Vaccines

Guidelines for emergency vaccine transport and short-term storage

- Routine transport of vaccine stored in the freezer (MMR, MMRV, varicella, Zoster) is not allowed. These vaccines should only be moved when absolutely necessary.

- If vaccines must be transported to an off-site day clinic, transport only what is needed for that clinic day.

- If vaccines must be transported, contact your VFC Program Representative or the VFC Program.

- Have an Emergency Vaccine Management Plan that includes the name and address of your back-up site.

- Varicella-containing vaccines should be transported under frozen conditions. Do not freeze diluent for varicella-containing vaccines.

- Complete a Frozen Vaccine Transport Log (IMM-1116) to document the duration and temperature monitoring information.

Assemble packing supplies and documents

Most emergencies happen suddenly. Be sure you are prepared for emergency transport of frozen vaccine by always having the following supplies ready.


2. Frozen cold packs. Keep enough frozen cold packs in your vaccine freezer to make two layers in the transport cooler. You will need 6-8 frozen packs per cooler. NEVER USE DRY ICE.

3. Thermometer. Use a VFC-compliant thermometer. If you normally use a continuous-read monitoring system, you will need a portable thermometer for vaccine transport.

4. Packing materials. Use any material like bubble wrap to place on top of the frozen cold packs to prevent contents from shifting. Make sure you DO NOT place bubble wrap between the vaccine and frozen packs.

5. Frozen Vaccine Transport Log. You must document the total timeframe and temperatures vaccines were exposed to during transport to and from the back-up facility. Put a copy of the log in each cooler that might be used to transport frozen vaccine.

6. Transporting Frozen Vaccine job aid. Put one copy in each cooler that might be used to transport frozen vaccine.

Pack vaccines and prepare for transport

Prepare for transport

- Verify that the destination site has enough room for your vaccine and that someone will be there when the vaccine arrives.

- Verify that you have all the packing supplies on the above list.

- Complete the Frozen Vaccine Transport Log

Pack vaccines

- Spread a layer of frozen ice packs to cover the bottom of the cooler. Do not use dry ice.

- Stack layers of vaccine boxes directly on top of the frozen ice packs.

- Place the thermometer probe with the top layer of vaccine.

- Fill the cooler to the top with insulation material (bubble wrap).

- Spread another layer of frozen ice packs to cover the vaccine.

- Place the thermometer’s display on top of the insulation/packing material. Place the Frozen Vaccine Transport Log on top. Then close the cooler and transport the vaccine.

Unpack the vaccine

When you reach the destination site, record the temperature in the cooler on the Transport Log before removing the vaccine. If it is:

- Below 5°F (-15°C), unpack the vaccine and put it in the freezer.

- Above 5°F (-15°C), call your VFC Representative or the VFC Program immediately at 877-243-8832. Then label the vaccine “Do Not Use” and place it in the freezer.