



IMPORTANT MESSAGE

California Department of Public Health
Immunization Branch
Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program
850 Marina Bay Parkway
Richmond, CA 94804

Toll Free Phone:
877-2GET-VFC (877-243-8832)

Toll Free Fax:
877-FAXX-VFC (877-329-9832)

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CHANGE IN SHIPPING PACKAGING FOR VARIVAX®

Dear VFC provider,

Merck recently issued an important notification regarding their change in packaging for all varicella vaccine shipments. Effective June 6, 2011, Merck discontinued the use of dry-ice for the shipment of varicella vaccines in order to prevent the product from being subjected to temperatures colder than -58°F (-50°C).

Instead, vaccines are now packed for shipping with 6 frozen gel packs in each shipping container. Please carefully refer to the flyer included in each shipment to alert you of this change. You can so get a copy at www.eziz.org or at https://www.merckvaccines.com/Professional-Resources/Documents/announcements/New_Shipping_Package_for_VARIVAX_and_ZOSTAVAX.pdf

The new vaccine packaging is designed to maintain proper temperatures while the vaccine is in transit from Merck to your clinic (a 3-day period). Upon vaccine arrival:

- Please ensure clinic staff opens the shipment immediately upon receipt
- Verify shipping dates and contents, and store the vaccine in the freezer at a temperatures below +5°F (-15°C). The diluent, located in the top compartment of the shipping box can be stored in your refrigerator or at room temperature.
- If the container is received after the shipment date located on the packing, please notify VFC's Customer Service Center immediately, at 1-877-243-8832. VFC will contact the Merck Order Management Center to request a vaccine replacement.

Merck recommends that varicella vaccine NOT be stored on dry ice. Therefore, if varicella vaccine must be packaged for transportation to an alternate location (in case of an emergency), vaccines should be packed in a separate container (if non-frozen vaccines will also be transported) with sufficient frozen gel packs to maintain recommended temperatures during transportation (+5°F (-15°C) or colder).

Please contact the VFC Customer Service Center for any questions you may have regarding this change.

Help your patients meet their new 7th through 12th Grade Tdap Requirement!

Issue reminder notices to those who have not yet received Tdap ♦ Vaccinate ASAP to reduce the back-to-school rush ♦ If appointment slots booked up, offer Tdap only during walk-in or after-hours time blocks, then bring patients back for comprehensive care.