

Storage and Handling Guidance for Merck Varicella Vaccines (Varicella, Zoster, and MMRV)

How will Varicella-containing vaccines arrive at the office?

Vaccine will be shipped from Merck directly to the practice, and will no longer arrive on dry ice. Frozen gel packs will be utilized and quantity of gel packs is based on carefully determined guidelines. Merck has taken into account maximum temperatures the container will be exposed to during transit. Opening of shipping containers will introduce warm air, and may show higher than expected temperatures.

1. When you receive varicella-containing vaccine, immediately place in the permanent freezer unit between -58°F to +5°F (-50°C to -15°C)

What do we do if Varicella-containing vaccines arrive warm?

Merck has packed an adequate amount of frozen gel packs to maintain temperatures for THREE days (72 hours) from shipment date located on packing slip. If vaccine arrives within 72 hours it is considered safe to use. If shipment arrives over 72 hours or if there are questions about condition of public or private vaccine at time of delivery, then call Merck ASAP with specific concerns (include condition of box and time of delivery); follow these steps:

1. Immediately place varicella-containing vaccine in permanent freezer unit between -58°F to +5°F (-50°C to -15°C)
2. Place vaccine in clearly labeled paper bag marked "Do Not Use"
3. Contact Merck call center **immediately** at 1-800-637-2579 for guidance

What are the transport recommendations for Varicella-containing vaccines?

The recommendation from CDC and Merck is to **NOT** transport varicella-containing vaccine. If transport is necessary, it should be done using a portable freezer type unit that maintains temperatures -58°F to +5°F (-50°C to -15°C).

How is temperature excursion defined?

A temperature excursion is when temperatures recorded in a permanent or transport storage unit are **above or below** recommended range. In the case of varicella-containing vaccines the range is -58°F to +5°F (-50°C to -15°C).

How do we transport Varicella-containing vaccines?

1. Document the time vaccine is removed from the permanent freezer unit & the time it is placed into a portable freezer type unit (preferred transport unit by CDC and Merck) or in a cooler with frozen packs
2. Make sure a thermometer is in the transport unit, near the vaccine
3. Monitor and document temperature in transport unit at beginning & end of transport; if transport will be longer than one hour, monitor and document hourly temperatures
4. At the end of transport, return vaccine to permanent freezer unit at -58°F to +5°F (-50°C to -15°C)
5. If temperatures are maintained at recommended range for varicella-containing vaccine, then further action is NOT needed

Merck does **NOT** recommend reuse of shipping material (gel packs, insulated box) to transport varicella-containing vaccines.

What do we do if temperatures are out of recommended range -58°F to +5°F (-50°C to -15°C), at any time?

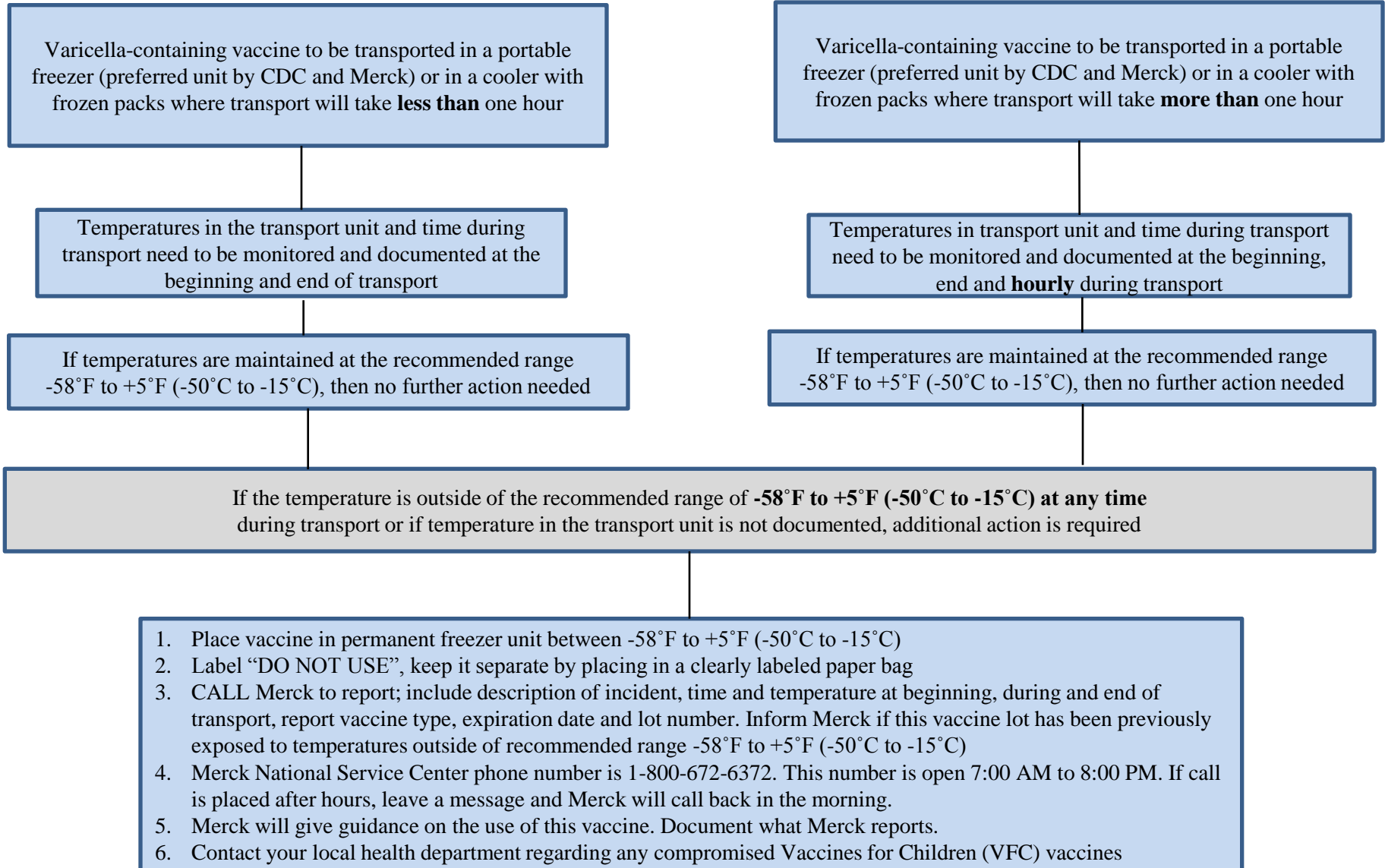
1. Place vaccine in permanent freezer unit at -58°F to +5°F (-50°C to -15°C)
2. Label "DO NOT USE", keep vaccine separated from other vaccine by placing it in a clearly labeled paper bag
3. Call Merck National Service Center at 1-800-672-6372 to report:
 - a. Description of incident, time and temperature at beginning, during and end of transport
 - b. Report vaccine type, expiration date and lot number
 - c. Inform Merck if this vaccine lot has been previously exposed to temperatures outside of recommended range
4. This Merck phone line is open 7:00 AM to 8:00 PM. If the call is placed after hours leave a message and Merck will call back in the morning.
5. Merck will give guidance on the use of this vaccine. Document findings.
6. Contact your local health department regarding any compromised Vaccines for Children (VFC) vaccines

Key Notes:

- **Merck Call Center is 1-800-637-2579** and is for delivery concerns only. **Merck National Service Center is 1-800-672-6372** and is for issues when the temperature falls out of recommended range.
- Varicella-containing vaccines **should be stored frozen** at temperatures between -58°F to +5°F (-50°C to -15°C), until it is reconstituted for administration
- Varicella-containing vaccines may be stored at refrigerator temperature (36°F to 46°F, 2°C to 8°C) for up to **72 continuous hours** prior to reconstitution
- Once reconstituted, varicella-containing vaccines must be administered in 30 minutes or discarded

Responding to Situations Where Varicella-Containing Vaccine Requires Transport

- CDC and Merck do NOT recommend transporting varicella-containing vaccines



- **These five steps should be followed in the event of an equipment malfunction or power outage**