

Guidance for Transporting Merck Varicella-Containing Vaccines

MDHHS, CDC, and Merck **DO NOT** recommend transporting varicella-containing vaccines (VAR, HZV, MMRV)

Frozen varicella-containing vaccines should never be transported except in an emergency.

In case of an emergency, please follow the guidance below:

Transporting varicella-containing vaccines using a portable freezer (CDC recommended)

- Remove vaccine from the permanent freezer and place into a portable freezer unit.
- Place a calibrated temperature monitoring device (preferably with a buffered probe) in the container as close as possible to the vaccines.
- Document the temperature and time at the beginning and end of transport. If transport will be longer than one hour, monitor and document temperatures hourly.
- If temperatures are maintained between -58°F to +5°F (-50°C to -15°C), immediately upon arrival, place vaccine(s) in a stand-alone freezer that will maintain these temperatures. No further action is needed.
- If temperatures are not maintained:
 - a) Label “DO NOT USE” and place vaccine in the refrigerator
 - b) Do NOT use or discard vaccine until the vaccine manufacturer is contacted at 1-800-637-2590
 - c) Contact your local health department regarding any compromised Vaccines for Children (VFC) vaccine(s) or for any additional storage and handling questions

Transporting varicella-containing vaccines at refrigerated temps (NOT recommended, use as a last resort)

- Remove vaccine from the permanent freezer and place into a portable vaccine refrigerator, insulated hard-sided or Styrofoam™ cooler.
- Use the same packing layers as noted for refrigerated vaccines. See: www.cdc.gov/vaccines/recs/storage/downloads/emergency-transport.pdf
- Frozen water bottles can be used as coolant packs if they are properly conditioned.
- Place a calibrated temperature monitoring device (preferably with a buffered probe) in the container as close as possible to the vaccines.
- Document the temperature and time at the beginning and end of transport. If transport will be longer than one hour, monitor and document temperatures hourly.
- Immediately upon arrival at off-site facility:
 - a) Label “DO NOT USE” and store vaccine(s) in the refrigerator (i.e., temperature it was transported in)
 - b) Do NOT use or discard vaccine until the vaccine manufacturer is contacted at 1-800-637-2590 for guidance
 - c) Contact your local health department regarding any compromised Vaccines for Children (VFC) vaccine(s) or for any additional storage and handling questions

KEY POINTS

- Store varicella-containing vaccines (VAR, HZV, MMRV) in a freezer between -58°F and +5°F (-50°C and -15°C).
- Varicella-containing vaccines that are not transported at temperatures between -58°F and +5°F (-50°C and -15°C) cannot be put back into the freezer unless approved by the manufacturer.
- Do NOT use dry ice to transport varicella-containing vaccine even for temporary storage or emergency transport.
- Merck does NOT recommend reuse of shipping material (e.g., coolant packs, insulated box) to transport varicella-containing vaccines.
- Never freeze diluents, not even during transport.
- If necessary, varicella-containing vaccines that have not been reconstituted may be transported at refrigerated temperatures for up to 72 continuous hours. If the vaccine has been exposed to refrigerator temperatures for 72 hours or longer, it must be discarded.
- Be sure you are prepared for emergency transport of frozen vaccine by always having the appropriate supplies ready.