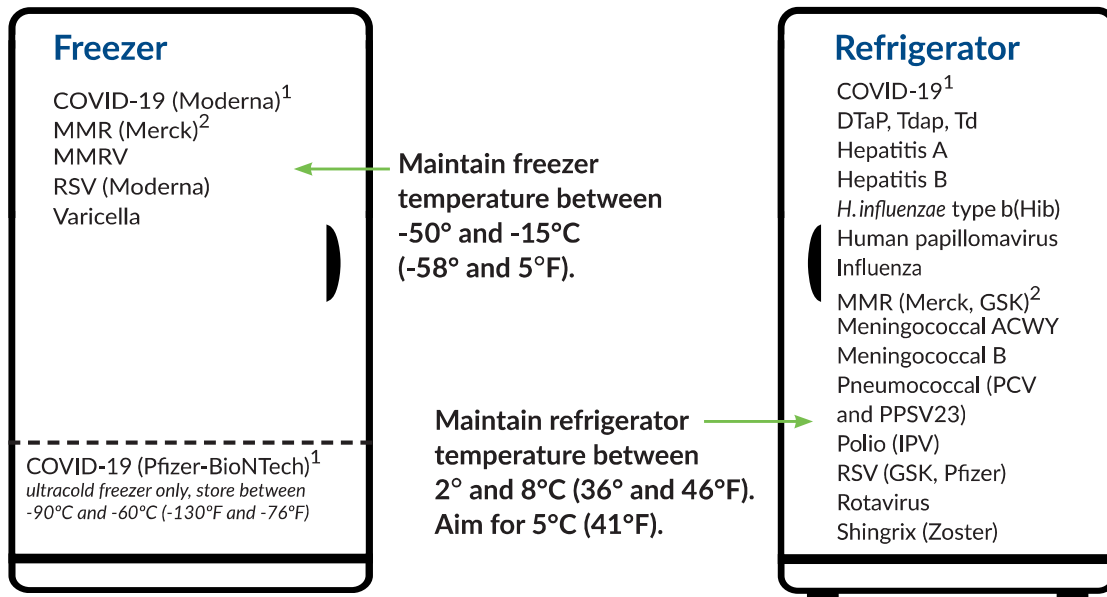


# Vaccine Handling Tips

**REMEMBER:** Improperly stored or outdated vaccines won't protect your patients!



## Manage vaccine inventories.

Inventory your vaccine supplies at least monthly and before placing an order. Expired vaccine must never be used, and it becomes “cash in the trash!”

## Always use the vaccine with the soonest expiration date first.

Move vaccine with the soonest expiration date to the front of the storage unit and mark it to be used first. These actions help ensure it will be picked up first by someone selecting vaccine from the unit.

## Store vaccine appropriately.<sup>3</sup>

Place vaccines in refrigerator or freezer immediately upon receiving shipment. Keep vaccine vials in their original packaging. Place vaccine in clearly labeled<sup>4</sup> baskets or other containers with a 2–3" separation between baskets and from the wall of unit. Separate or clearly mark vaccines to distinguish those that were supplied from your state's Vaccines for Children program (or other state-funded source) from those that were privately purchased. Do not store vaccines in the door or on the floor of the unit.

## Notes

1. COVID-19 vaccines requiring storage in an ultracold (Pfizer-BioNTech) or regular freezer (Moderna) may be stored in a refrigerator with a shortened expiration date (see package inserts for details). For links to all current CDC COVID-19 resources, including beyond-use-date (BUD) tracking labels, see Immunize.org's "Checklist of Current Versions of U.S. COVID-19 Vaccination Guidance and Clinic Support Tools" ([www.immunize.org/catg.d/p3130.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p3130.pdf)).

2. MMR II (Merck) may be stored in either the freezer or the refrigerator.

3. Refer to package insert for specific instructions on the storage of each vaccine. If you have questions about the condition of the vaccine upon arrival, immediately place the vaccine in recommended storage, mark it “do not use,” and then call your state health department or the vaccine manufacturer(s) to determine whether the potency of the vaccine(s) has been affected. For other questions, call the immunization program at your state or local health department.

4. For help with organizing and labeling vaccines, consider using resources developed by and available from CDC at [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/admin/storage/guide/](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/admin/storage/guide/)

## Stabilize temperatures.

Store ice packs in the freezer and large jugs of water in the refrigerator along with the vaccines. This will help maintain a stable, cold temperature in case of a power failure or if the refrigerator or freezer doors are opened frequently or are accidentally left open. Because frequent opening of either the refrigerator or freezer door can lead to temperature variations that could affect vaccine efficacy, you should not store food or beverages in the refrigerator or freezer.

## Safeguard the electrical supply to the storage unit.

Make sure the refrigerator and freezer are plugged into outlets in a protected area where they cannot be disconnected accidentally. Label the refrigerator, freezer, electrical outlets, fuses, and circuit breakers on the power circuit with information that clearly identifies the perishable nature of vaccines and the immediate steps to be taken in case of interruption of power.<sup>5</sup> If your building has auxiliary power, use the outlet supplied by that system.

[www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/admin/storage/guide/vaccine-storage-labels.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/admin/storage/guide/vaccine-storage-labels.pdf) and [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/admin/storage/guide/vaccine-storage-labels-flu.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/admin/storage/guide/vaccine-storage-labels-flu.pdf).

5. For easy help with labeling units and power supplies, see Immunize.org signs “Do Not Unplug Refrigerator or Freezer” ([www.immunize.org/catg.d/p2090.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p2090.pdf)) and “Do Not Turn Off Circuit Breaker” ([www.immunize.org/catg.d/p2091.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p2091.pdf)). For guidance on steps to take during a power interruption, see Immunize.org's “Vaccine Storage Emergency Response Worksheet” ([www.immunize.org/catg.d/p3051.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p3051.pdf))

