

Vaccine Storage – risk reduction tips

Now that we are approaching the rollout of COVID 19 vaccinations in General Practice, it is a perfect opportunity to check your vaccination refrigerator and ensure that your house is in order.

The following are some practical to ensure safe vaccine storage.

The 10 Rs of Safe Vaccine Storage

1. **Remove** out of date vaccines and return them to the HSE National Cold Chain Service at next delivery. Vaccinations that are supplied outside this service should be disposed of as per local policy.
2. **Reorganise** the refrigerator: Ensure vaccine shelves are clearly labelled and not overfilled to allow air to circulate the packages. Vaccines should not be stored on the shelves or storage compartments of the door of non-pharmaceutical refrigerators. Manufacturers' recommendations on the storage of individual vaccines should be observed.
3. **Rotate** your existing stock ensuring vaccines close to expiry date are stored to the front and used first.
4. **Regular** stock take: Closely monitor your vaccine stock to ensure your supplies can meet the demand at the practice.
5. **Read** the refrigerator temperatures (current, maximum, and minimum) twice daily in line with the [national guidelines](#). Vaccines must be kept at temperatures between 2-8 degrees Celsius. The door opening should be kept to a minimum. Consider purchasing a data logger that will record the internal refrigerator temperature in the event of power failure. Remember a data logger does not remove the need to check the vaccine refrigerator temperatures twice daily. The practice should consider nominating a member of staff to undertake this duty including cover when they are on leave. Remember to lock the refrigerator door when not in use.
6. **Record** temperature readings in a logbook or electronically, including date and time, and sign each entry.
7. **Reset** the thermometer after each reading. The maximum/minimum reading should be cleared from refrigerator memory and reset after each reading.
8. **React** the person making the recording should take action if the temperature falls outside the +2°C to +8°C range and document this action. Guidance on the procedure following a breakdown in the Cold Chain is available on the HSE [website](#).
9. **Routine** maintenance: the vaccine refrigerator should be cleaned every two months with a 1:10 solution of sodium hypochlorite. Annual maintenance and calibration should be carried out as per the manufacturers' guidance. Records should be kept of refrigerator maintenance and servicing and practice staff should know where to access them in the event of an issue.
10. **Remember** before administering any vaccine remember to check and double-check it is the correct
 - vaccine
 - patient
 - site of injection
 - interval between the previous dose.

All relevant staff must be aware of the HSE guidelines concerning vaccine ordering and storage which are available on the HSE [website](#).

“This article was originally published in our Medzine on 26 February 2021. The contents of this publication are indicative of current developments and contain guidance on general medico legal queries. It does not constitute and should not be relied upon as definitive legal, clinical or other advice and if you have any specific queries, please contact Medisec for advice”