Vaccine Storage & Cold Chain

#### Policy

Our practice ensures that all drugs/medications, including vaccines, are obtained, stored, administered, and/or disposed of in accordance with the manufacturer’s directions and in line with jurisdictional requirements.

Vaccine storage requires maintenance of the 'cold chain' to ensure that a potent vaccine is given to our patients. The 'cold chain' is the system of transporting and storing vaccines within the safe temperature range of between **2ºC - 8ºC**.

All vaccines are subject to stock rotation and checks for expiry dates as per our practice’s stock check procedures.

The fridge used for vaccine storage and any temperature monitoring equipment is maintained in accordance with our equipment schedule.

<<DESIGNATED COLD CHAIN STAFF MEMBER (ROLE)>> is the staff member with designated responsibility for ensuring our cold chain management processes comply with the current edition of the national vaccine storage guidelines and for conducting an annual audit of our vaccine storage procedures.

This role is defined in their position description.

Procedure

Tasks associated with maintaining the cold chain of vaccine storage may be delegated to other staff members, however <<DESIGNATED STAFF MEMBER>> has primary responsibility to:

* Ensure our vaccine storage procedures comply with the *“Strive for 5: National Vaccine Storage Guidelines”.*
* Communicate these guidelines to staff and develop documentation of the necessary procedures.
* Provide adequate training to staff appropriate for their level of vaccine involvement
* Ensure there is a process for handing over cold chain responsibility to another designated person when they are unavailable to perform their duties*.*
* Conduct an annual self-audit of our vaccine storage using the self-audit guide in the National Vaccine Storage Guidelines: Strive for 5.
* To ensure appropriate actions are taken if the temperature has been outside the recommended range.
* Maintain the vaccine storage equipment and temperature recording thermometer.

Maintenance of cold chain within the practice

1. The Vaccine storage guidelines as outlined in “National Vaccine Storage Guidelines - Strive for 5” should be adhered to.
2. Our practice must always have a reliable and stable purpose-built refrigerator with adequate capacity to meet our practice needs.
3. Refrigerator door openings should be kept to a minimum.

4. **<<DESIGNATED STAFF>>** is the person designated with the responsibility for overseeing all vaccine procedures (checking refrigerator, ordering stock and receiving stock) and implementation of protocols. Education and information for everyone handling vaccines must be provided with written instructions easily accessible. This includes new staff and reception staff.

5. Food should never be stored in the same refrigerator as vaccines.

6. The expiry date of vaccines should be checked regularly and stock rotated to ensure those with earlier expiry dates are used first.

7. Vaccines should be kept in their boxes.

8. Never over-stock the fridge.

9. Record the fridge temperature as outlined in the attached template titled “Twice Daily Fridge Temperature Sheet”.

Maintenance of cold chain away from the practice

1. Advise patients purchasing their vaccines from a pharmacy to make prior arrangement to collect their vaccines immediately before their appointment and to insulate them to prevent warming. Most pharmacy’s supply an insulated disposable bag for transport. The patient should be advised that upon arrival at the practice to inform the practice staff that they have a vaccine. This should be labeled with the patients name and stored immediately in the vaccine fridge.

For more in-depth cold chain information including how to manage a power failure, how to pack a cooler (useful for off-site immunisation) or how to defrost a fridge refer to the following references.

Procedures for temperatures NOT within 2ºC to 8ºC

Note: Most vaccines are damaged at 0º C.

* If the fridge temperature falls below 2ºC or above 8ºC for more than 20 minutes notify <<DESIGNATED STAFF MEMBER>>
* This person should immediately
* For government funded vaccines, contact the local State Department of Health (where we order vaccines from) or download cold chain breach forms from their website
* For privately purchased vaccines, contact vaccine manufacturers for advice
* Alert all staff that the vaccines from the fridge are unavailable for use pending advice from the State Health Department and place a sign on the fridge door to this effect.- Do not discard vaccines until advice has been received.
* Implement immediately any action directed by the State Health Department and by vaccine manufacturer for private vaccines.