

## **FROZEN VACCINE – HANDLE WITH CARE!**

All staff members involved in receiving, storing and administering vaccines must be trained in the special handling requirements of frozen vaccines because they are different from all other childhood immunizations currently in use.

- ◆ Frozen vaccines will be shipped to you directly from Merck, the vaccine maker. They are packed with frozen, biodegradable gelpacks.
- ◆ Frozen vaccines must be stored at +5 degrees Fahrenheit (-15 Celsius) or colder. Freezers that reliably maintain this temperature are acceptable. Standard household freezers manufactured within the last five years should maintain this temperature range.
- ◆ Frozen vaccine was tested for stability in frost-free freezers because defrost cycles sometimes raise the freezer temperature (briefly) to 30F or more. Vaccine remained stable under these conditions. The temperature spike caused by a frost-free cycle typically lasts 30 minutes or less.
- ◆ As of 2013, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) no longer recommends storing frozen vaccines in the freezer section of a refrigerator/freezer combination unit. Providers are encouraged to plan for discontinuing use of the freezer section and investing in a stand-alone freezer (preferably frost-free).
- ◆ Smaller, countertop or “dorm-style” refrigerators with a freezer compartment inside the refrigerator CANNOT BE USED for storing frozen vaccines. The small freezer sections are not frost-free and cannot be made cold enough without endangering refrigerated vaccines. Dorm-style refrigerators are PROHIBITED for any and all vaccine storage.
- ◆ Health care providers should monitor freezer temperatures for a minimum of one week before receiving and storing frozen vaccines. The freezer temperature must maintain a consistent +5 F (-15 C) or colder—an average temperature of zero Fahrenheit is best.
- ◆ Both Varivax and ProQuad must be administered within 30 minutes following reconstitution. Discard reconstituted Varivax or ProQuad that is not used within 30 minutes. Do not re-freeze reconstituted vaccines.
- ◆ If you have mistakenly put frozen vaccine vials in the refrigerator, left them at room temperature or had a power outage, put the vaccine in a bag, label the bag with the date and “state-supplied vaccine—do not use,” put it back in the freezer and call Public Health at (206) 296-4774. Please do not make decisions about vaccine safety in such cases without consulting with Public Health!