

# COVID-19 and Influenza Vaccine Storage and Handling Factsheet

This factsheet can be used as a guide when storing and handling COVID-19 vaccine that is transported and stored between 2° to 8° C. For more information on vaccine storage, please visit: <https://www.gov.nl.ca/hcs/files/publichealth-cdc-im-section7-biological-products.pdf>

## Transport of Vaccine

- Vaccine is to be packed in insulated/thermal carriers with ice packs. Insulated carriers and ice packs are the responsibility of the health care provider picking up vaccine from the regional depot within NL Health Services (NLHS). To avoid freezing, the ice packs should be allowed to remain at room temperature for 3-5 minutes before being placed next to the vaccine. When vaccine is picked up from NLHS it will be packed, typically in a paper bag. Place the paper bag with vaccine into the insulated carrier. **(Note: please note, the process may vary between NLHS depots. Depot staff will communicate transportation requirements when vaccine is ordered).**
- Vaccines should not be transported in the trunk or rear of the van or car in private vehicles.
- When vaccine arrives at its destination, it should be immediately placed in a vaccine fridge regulated at 2-8 degrees.

## Specific Storage Requirements of Influenza Vaccine

- NLHS will provide health care providers with influenza vaccine that is stored at 2-8 degrees. Vaccine should be stored in its original packaging and protected from light.
- Vaccine stored at 2-8 degrees that is not punctured is stable until the expiry date identified on the vaccine vial label.
- Vaccine stored at 2-8 degrees that has been punctured must be utilized within 28 days.

## Specific Storage Requirements of Moderna Spikevax Vaccine

- NLHS will be providing health care providers with thawed Moderna vaccine at 2-8 degrees. It is important to note that Moderna vaccine vials that are not punctured are stable for **30** days at 2-8 degrees. You will be advised of this expiry date upon receiving vaccine at your regional depot. Please note, the expiry date is NOT the date printed on the vaccine vial, you will need to follow the expiration date provided by NLHS.
- Moderna vaccine that has **not been punctured** is also stable at room temperature for up to **24** hours.
- Once a Moderna vaccine vial **is punctured**, it can be stored at room temperature or refrigerated, but must be discarded after **24 hours from the time it was punctured**.

## Specific Storage Requirements of Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty Vaccine

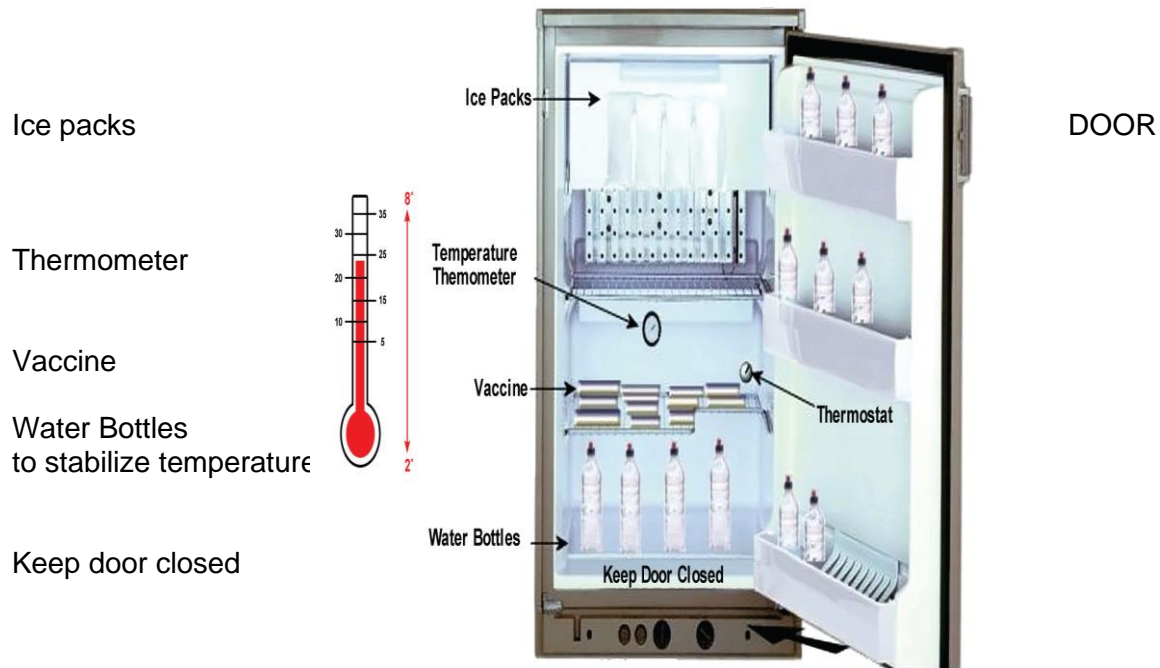
- NLHS will be providing health care providers with thawed Pfizer BioNTech Comirnaty vaccine at 2-8 degrees. It is important to note that vaccine vials that are not punctured are stable for **10 weeks** at 2-8 degrees. You will be advised of this expiry date upon receiving vaccine at your regional depot. Please note, the expiry date is NOT the date printed on the vaccine vial, you will need to follow the expiration date provided by NLHS.
- Pfizer BioNTech Comirnaty vaccine that has **not been punctured** is also stable at room temperature for up to **12 hours**.
- Once a Pfizer BioNTech Comirnaty vaccine vial **is punctured**, it can be stored at room temperature or refrigerated, but must be discarded after **12 hours from the time it was punctured**.

## General Storage Guidelines for Vaccine

- Regular household refrigerators or bar sized refrigerators are not recommended. Refrigerators used to store vaccines should not be used to store other products, such as food or other medical supplies or specimens. Vaccines should be stored in the central part of the refrigerator, with space on all sides to allow good air circulation.
- The temperature of the vaccine fridge must be maintained at 2-8 degrees. This can be verified with the use of a data logger or vaccine thermometer.
- Refrigerator temperature should be documented twice a day, morning and afternoon. Temperature monitoring logs can be found at:  
<https://www.gov.nl.ca/hcs/files/publichealth-cdc-temperature-monitoring-log.pdf>
- Do not store vaccines on refrigerator doors, or near the cooling units, as these areas represent the extremes of temperature within the refrigerator.
- Refrigerator doors should be opened only as often as is necessary, and for only as long as is necessary to replace or remove the product.
- Place bottles of water (1 or 2 L soft drink type) on the door, at the top and bottom of the vaccine in the refrigerator. This will help to maintain the temperature at a constant level (see diagram).
- Refrigerator plugs (and wall outlets) should be located in an area where they will not be knocked out by accident. Alternatives include wiring the refrigerator cord directly into the outlet, or attaching a protective cage over the outlet and a sign *Do Not Unplug* attached.
- All refrigerators should be defrosted when there is an accumulation of more than 1 cm of ice inside the freezer compartment.
- All biological products are subject to deterioration unless stored under carefully controlled temperatures. The range for most products is from 2° to 8° C above freezing point and well below room temperature. Additional information can be found within the vaccine's product monograph.

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## Diagram of Refrigeration Storage



The current vaccines available in Newfoundland and Labrador can be found on the Department of Health and Community Services website:

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/vaccine/resources-for-health-care-professionals/>

**Note:** For vaccine temperature excursions outside the temperatures parameters listed above, please contact [mirandaodriscoll@gov.nl.ca](mailto:mirandaodriscoll@gov.nl.ca) for further direction on vaccine stability.