

# **VACCINE STORAGE UNIT ...Things to Consider!**

## **New Vaccine Storage and Handling Guidelines from the CDC**

In response to recent scientific studies on equipment used for vaccine storage and a better understanding of best practices for vaccine storage and handling, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is providing interim guidance on appropriate vaccine storage and handling practices. Due to the high cost of vaccines and their fragility, the CDC is recommending that all providers begin using 1) stand-alone refrigerator and freezer units, and 2) data loggers for 24 hour temperature monitoring.

Home-style kitchen combination units with two doors and two thermostat controls are still permitted by the Nevada State Immunization Program (NSIP), as are home-style kitchen units with one thermostat where only the refrigerator section is being used. All home-style kitchen units with one thermostat in which both compartments are being used and dorm-style units of any type are unacceptable for vaccine storage, even temporary. If your facility has one of these types of units, then it will have to be replaced with stand-alone units. These storage and handling changes will assure that VFC vaccines, as well as privately purchased vaccines and medications are stored in a manner to assure viability. In addition, certified calibrated thermometers are required, and 24 hour temperature monitoring equipment, such as data loggers, is highly recommended.

**ANY VACCINE STORAGE UNITS SHOWN TO NOT MAINTAIN STABLE TEMPERATURES WILL HAVE TO BE REPLACED WITH STAND-ALONE UNITS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.**

### **Stand-alone units now strongly recommended:**

- Stand-alone units are self-contained units that only refrigerate or freeze and are suitable for vaccine storage.
- Stand-alone units vary in size from a compact, under-the-counter style to a large, stand-alone pharmaceutical grade unit.
- Frost-free or automatic defrost cycle units are preferred.
- Use of stand-alone units is a best practice for vaccine storage and handling.
- Providers have many options for finding affordable, office-appropriate stand-alone units. You can shop local home improvement stores (Home Depot, Lowes) or go for lab/pharmaceutical grade units (Panasonic, Amer Biotech Supply, GemRef):
  - <http://www.homedepot.com/> - **search within appliances**
  - <http://www.lowes.com/> - **search within appliances**
  - [http://www.panasonic.com/business/healthcare/biomedical/vaccine/?\\_kk=5ce24da0-8f0d-46d9-a4fc-9e7e44de6fe5&\\_kt=16601245831](http://www.panasonic.com/business/healthcare/biomedical/vaccine/?_kk=5ce24da0-8f0d-46d9-a4fc-9e7e44de6fe5&_kt=16601245831)
  - <http://www.americanbiotechsupply.com/Products/Refrigerators/Pharmacy-Vaccine-Basic.aspx>
  - [http://www.gemref.com/vaccine\\_refrigerators\\_freezers.php](http://www.gemref.com/vaccine_refrigerators_freezers.php)

### **In evaluating or choosing a vaccine storage unit, make sure that it:**

- Is able to maintain required vaccine storage temperatures year-round (35-46° F for refrigerator and 5° F or colder for freezer);
- Is frost-free or has an automatic defrost cycle;
- Is large enough to hold the year's largest inventory (without crowding or touching the sides or back of the unit);
- Has sufficient room to store water bottles in the refrigerator and coolant packs in the freezer to stabilize temperature and minimize temperature excursions; and
- Is dedicated to the storage of vaccines and medications (no food allowed).

**Reminder: Vaccines are not to be stored in the crisper drawers or the doors of the unit!!**

## Acceptable Vaccine Storage Units:

- **Stand-alone pharmaceutical grade** – these models are the most reliable, but may be more costly. These units can be purchased in smaller sizes (e.g., counter-high) that may be appropriate for the amount of vaccine storage needed in a small to medium size office.
- **Stand-alone commercial style** – these models are lower quality than pharmaceutical grade, but still offer more stable storage conditions than combination units; these stand-alone units are also more affordable. These units can be purchased in smaller sizes (e.g., counter-high) that may be appropriate for the amount of vaccine storage needed in a small to medium size office.
- **Combination refrigerator/freezer unit sold for home use (not apartment size)** – these models offer relatively reliable storage conditions and are moderately priced. These units are currently acceptable as long as each compartment has a separate external door and separate temperature control; and the unit is proven to maintain stable temperatures at all times.

## Unacceptable Vaccine Storage Units

The following units are unacceptable for vaccine storage at any time or duration, including for daily use:

- “Dorm-style” units provide poor temperature control and often freeze vaccines that require refrigeration, resulting in immediate and irreversible damage.
- “Dorm-style” units are defined as small refrigerator/freezer combination units with a single external door and an evaporator plate or cooling coil that forms a small freezer compartment within the unit.



- One-control household combination units also provide poor temperature control and are less capable of simultaneously maintaining proper temperatures in both the refrigerator and freezer compartments, resulting in immediate and irreversible damage. **Only the refrigerator section of a one-control unit can be used for vaccine storage.**
- Four foot high combination units are not acceptable.
- Any household refrigerator unit over 10 years old is not acceptable.

**For more information on vaccine storage go to:**

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/recs/storage/default.htm>

**Before purchasing or setting up a new unit, contact Karissa Loper at (775) 684-3462.**