

# Transporting Vaccine to Off-Site Clinics

## General Recommendations

The best assurance of vaccine efficacy is to minimize the number of times vaccines are handled and transported. If vaccine transportation to another location is required, it is critical that vaccine potency is protected by maintaining the cold chain at all times.

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When a multidose vial is used, Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations require that it be used only by the provider's office where it was first opened. A partially used vial may be transported to or from off-site clinics operated by the same provider as long as the cold chain is properly maintained. However, such a vial may not be transferred to another provider or transported across state lines. While there is no defined limit to the number of times vaccine may be transported to different clinic sites, multiple transport increases the risk that vaccine will be exposed to inappropriate storage conditions.

## Packing Vaccine for Transport to Off-Site Clinics

Different state health department immunization programs may recommend or require different vaccine transport practices and procedures. Contact your state health department immunization program for specific policies regarding vaccine transport, details on how to pack vaccine and diluent for transport, and procedures for maintaining the cold chain in the field.

The following are general guidelines for packing vaccine:

1. Use properly insulated containers to transport vaccine. These containers should be validated to ensure that they are capable of maintaining the vaccine at the correct temperatures. You may use the shipping containers the vaccines arrived in from the manufacturer. Alternatively, you may use hard-sided plastic insulated containers or Styrofoam™ coolers with at least 2-inch thick walls.



Use properly insulated containers to transport vaccine.

**Thin-walled Styrofoam™ coolers, such as those purchased at grocery stores to hold beverages, are not acceptable.**

2. Pack enough refrigerated/frozen packs to maintain the cold chain. Do not use loose or bagged ice. The number and placement of refrigerated/frozen packs inside the container will depend on container size and outside temperature. For detailed instructions, see [Chart of](#)

[Refrigerated/Frozen Pack Needs for Different Climates](#) in the Resources section.

3. Be sure to place an insulating barrier (e.g., bubble wrap, crumpled brown packing paper, Styrofoam™ peanuts) between the refrigerated/frozen packs and the vaccines to prevent accidental freezing. A layer of toweling is not sufficient as a barrier. The contents of the container should be layered as follows: refrigerated/frozen packs, barrier, vaccine, thermometer, another layer of barrier, and additional refrigerated/frozen packs.
4. Pack vaccines in their original packaging on top of the barrier. Do not remove vaccine vials from boxes, and do not draw up vaccine in advance.
5. Use a properly placed thermometer near the vaccine to assess whether the cold chain has been broken. The thermometer should be placed next to the vaccine and should not come in contact with the refrigerated/frozen packs.
6. Attach labels to the outside of the container to clearly identify the contents as being valuable and fragile vaccines.



Refrigerated/frozen packs.



Place bubble wrap, crumpled brown packing paper, or Styrofoam™ peanuts between the refrigerated/frozen packs and the vaccines.



Place a thermometer next to the vaccine but not in contact with the refrigerated/frozen packs.



Attach appropriate labels to the outside of the container.

7. Record vaccine type(s), quantity, date, time, and originating facility on a label on the outside of the container.

You may also see [Maintaining the Cold Chain During Transport](#) in the Resources section for general guidelines.

## Monitoring Temperatures During Off-Site Clinics

If vaccine must be maintained in an insulated cooler during an off-site clinic, keep the cooler closed as much as possible. At a minimum, vaccine temperatures should be checked and recorded **hourly**.

If vaccine must be maintained in an insulated cooler during an off-site clinic, keep the cooler closed as much as possible. A thermometer must be kept in the cooler with the vaccines, and temperatures should be checked and recorded periodically to ensure that the cold chain is not broken. The National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that, at a minimum, vaccine temperatures be checked and recorded **hourly**.

<http://www2a.cdc.gov/vaccines/ed/shtoolkit/pages/shipments.htm>