



3 June 2022- Refrigerator Management | Excess Vaccines and Consumables | Disposal of Vaccines | Reviewing Clinical Processes and Procedures | VOC Hours Queens Birthday Public Holiday

Dear Service Provider,

This email provides information from the National COVID Vaccine Taskforce (the Taskforce) about a range of matters relevant to pharmacies participating in the COVID-19 Vaccination in Community Pharmacy Program (CVCP), as follows:

- Refrigerator Management
- Excess Vaccines and Consumables
- Disposal of Vaccines
- Reviewing Clinical Processes and Procedures
- VOC Hours Queens Birthday Public Holiday.

Refrigerator Management

With the flu season in play, pharmacies will need to store both the COVID-19 vaccines and influenza vaccines. Some vaccine refrigerators may be reaching capacity.

To maintain vaccine potency and safety, pharmacies need to correctly store vaccines in line with the best practice guidelines found in the National Vaccine Storage Guidelines ['Strive for 5'](#).

Tips for pharmacies with purpose-built vaccine refrigerator:

- Check the expiry dates of vaccine stock.
- **Rotate vaccines with the shortest expiry dates to the front of the refrigerator when receiving a new delivery.**
- Store vaccines in their original packaging to insulate them from temperature fluctuations and protect them from light.
- Do not overstock or overcrowd shelves. Overstocking increases the likelihood of a cold chain breach placing all vaccine stock at risk.
- Allow space between vaccines for airflow to maintain constant ambient temperatures.
- Vaccines should be kept at least 4cm from refrigerator walls to reduce the risk of freezing.
- Be aware of cold spots in your refrigerator, commonly near air vents or cooling plates and regularly check for ice build-up.

- Ensure the power source to the refrigerator is labelled clearly to prevent it from being accidentally unplugged or turned off. If the power source is exposed, a switch cover may be necessary.
- Immunisation providers should ensure they have alternative provisions in place in the event of a power failure or refrigerator breakdown.
- Store vaccine brands separately and clearly labelled to reduce the risk of the incorrect vaccine being used.
- Always review where vaccines are placed in fridge before opening fridge door. For a solid door refrigerator, place a guide or a picture map on the outside of the refrigerator showing where each type of vaccine is stored.

A reminder:

- Thawed mRNA vaccines have a short shelf-life but vaccines can be used until the end of the day on the thaw use-by date. Thaw use-by date is defined as:
 - 30 days after the thaw date for Moderna vaccine
 - 31 days after the thaw date for Pfizer purple cap vaccine
 - 70 days after the thaw date for Pfizer orange cap vaccine.

Please note domestic refrigerators (including bar fridges) are not built or designed to store vaccines and must not be used for vaccine storage.

Excess Vaccines and consumables

Pharmacies have done an exceptional job in reducing vaccine wastage - thank you!

With lower COVID administration rates than earlier in the year, we ask for your ongoing assistance to **manage vaccine AND consumable stock**. *Order what you need - mindful of current inventory.*

If Pharmacies have excess vaccine and consumable stock:

- Transfer excess stock to surrounding sites in need of vaccines and consumables. We recommend you reach out to your local networks to try and redistribute your excess stock.
- The [Stock Transfer Policy](#) may be of assistance.
- If you require assistance in this process, please call the Vaccine Operations Centre (VOC) on 1800 318 208 or email covid19vaccineoperationscentre@health.gov.au.



The VOC can attempt to find surrounding sites that need vaccine or may be able to use your excess vaccines to fulfil additional order requests.

- For vaccines: the VOC will take into consideration shelf-life, time in transit and clinic location.
- Pharmacies will need to provide the VOC with the following details for the assessment:
 - details about excess stock, including batch number
 - expiry date and thaw use by date and
 - number of excess doses
- It is up to all participating pharmacies to maintain Cold Chain Requirements for transfers between sites and record any transfers in their Stock Management Report on CVAS.

Please note despite best efforts, the VOC will not be able to coordinate a redirection for every request.

Disposal of Vaccines

COVID vaccines must be disposed of in accordance with local requirements for disposal of Schedule 4 medication, the Product Information, and Safety Data Sheets for the COVID-19 vaccines.

Importantly:

- Unused vaccines **must not** be disposed of through general rubbish disposal or flushed/poured down the sink. This is dangerous for the community and harmful to the environment.
- Vaccines requiring disposal can be appropriately disposed of in a sharps disposal bin.
- Please refer to your state/territory legislation for the requirements in your region.

Reviewing Clinic Processes and Procedures

- All pharmacies are encouraged to review their onsite policies and procedures to ensure they are continuing to adhere to the [CVCP Program Rules](#).
- As a minimum, a suggested timing of reviews is when new vaccines become available, staff commence and complete the COVID-19 Vaccination Training, or when there are business changes at your pharmacy.



VOC Hours Queens Birthday Public Holiday

VOC operating hours will change during the **Queen's Birthday public holiday**. VOC will be open 9 am to 6 pm AEST between and 11 and 13 June 2022.

You can also contact the VOC via COVID19VaccineOperationsCentre@Health.gov.au.

Kind regards,

Pharmacy Programs Administrator