

# Storing COVID-19 Vaccines in a Pharmaceutical-Grade Refrigerator and Freezer Unit

Carefully organize vaccines in a refrigerator and freezer to help protect them and facilitate inventory management. Refer to the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) U.S. COVID-19 Vaccine Product Information** webpage for updates on COVID-19 vaccine storage and handling.

## Usable space is limited to inside the dashed lines.

The diagram shows a pharmaceutical-grade refrigerator and freezer unit. The freezer is on the left, set to 0°F, and the refrigerator is on the right, set to 40°F. The freezer contains three shelves of COVID vaccines in mesh baskets, with cold packs at the top and bottom. The refrigerator contains three shelves of COVID vaccines in mesh baskets, with cold packs at the bottom. Dashed lines indicate the usable storage space. Various callouts provide instructions and warnings.

- Freezer:**
  - Keep vaccines in original boxes, then in breathable plastic mesh baskets. Clearly label baskets by type of vaccine.
  - Monitor length of time of vaccine in the freezer using CDC's beyond-use date (BUD) labels.
  - Protect vaccines from light.
  - Separate vaccine supply by vaccine type, age range and/or basket color by type and age range.
  - Keep baskets two to three inches from walls and other baskets.
  - Store only vaccines and other medications in vaccine storage units.
- Refrigerator:**
  - Keep vaccines away from all cold air vents. Do not store vaccines on top shelf.
  - Do not refreeze thawed vaccines.
  - No food or drinks in refrigerator and freezer.
  - No vaccines in doors.
  - No clutter or overcrowding of vaccines.
  - No vaccine in solid plastic trays or containers.
  - No medications or biologics on shelves above vaccines.
- Temperature and BUD:**
  - Place vaccines with shorter expiration dates toward front of shelf. All expired vaccines should be reported to the returns/wastage section of the CIR.
  - Use CDC's Beyond Use Date (BUD) Tracking labels for each vaccine: **Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson/Janssen.**
- Temperature Ranges:**
  - Freezer:** Aim for 0°F/-18°C and below. Colder is better. Above 5°F/-15°C is too warm!
  - Refrigerator:** Aim for 40°F/5°C. Below 36°F/2°C is too cold! Above 46°F/8°C is too warm!

If you have any issues with your refrigerator, freezer or vaccines, notify the NYC Health Department at [nycimmunize@health.nyc.gov](mailto:nycimmunize@health.nyc.gov) or 347-396-2404.