

## COVID-19 Vaccine Storage and Handling Factsheet for Pharmacists

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 pharmacy picking up vaccine from the Regional Health Authority (RHA). 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 the RHA 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 RHA depots. RHAs 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 Moderna Vaccine

- RHA's will be providing pharmacists 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 the RHA.
- 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 AstraZeneca Vaccine

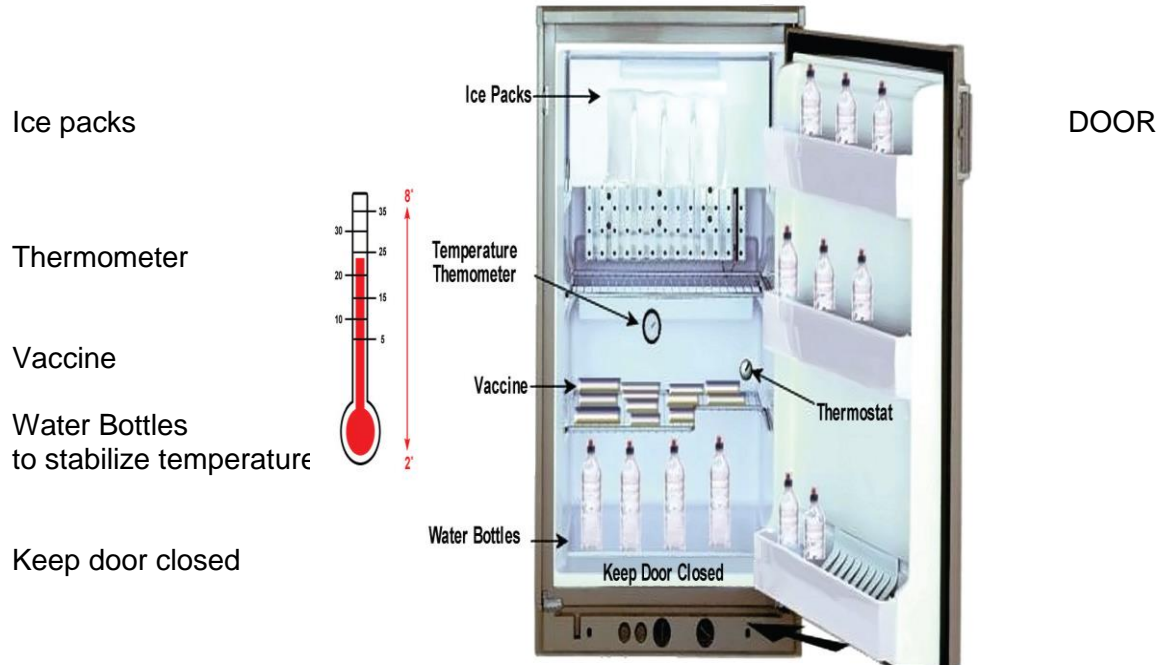
- AstraZeneca vaccine is stored at 2-8 degrees.
- AstraZeneca vaccine that has **not been punctured** and has not been exposed to room temperatures (temperatures above 8 degrees) is stable until its expiry date. If the expiry date is not identified on the vaccine vial label, Public Health will provide the expiry date.
- AstraZeneca vaccine that **has been punctured** is stable for:
  - 6 hours at room temperature (up to 25 degrees)
  - 48 hours in a vaccine regulated fridge at 2-8 degrees
  - An opened vial can be re-refrigerated, but the cumulative storage time at room temperature must not exceed 6 hours, and the total cumulative storage time must not exceed 48 hours

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### **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.

## 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 COVID-19 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.