

# Replacing Combination Household Storage Units

Your storage unit and temperature monitoring equipment help safeguard your vaccine. Having equipment that is accurate and functions properly is the best protection against the loss of vaccine due to out-of-range temperatures that could lead to revaccination of patients, replacement of expensive vaccine, and loss of patient confidence in your practice. For sites participating in the Minnesota Vaccines for Children (MnVFC) Program, vaccine cannot be stored in the freezer section of any combination household unit.

## Why should you replace your household combination unit?

It is riskier to use a household combination unit safely and requires more effort and care than pharmaceutical-grade and household stand-alone units.

- It is difficult to simultaneously maintain proper storage temperatures in the refrigerator and freezer compartments.
- Potential risk of damage to refrigerated vaccines when cold air from the freezer flows into the refrigerator.

## Never use dorm-style units!

A dorm-style unit is a combination refrigerator/freezer with one exterior door. Vaccines should never be stored in this type of unit and are considered unusable due to a significant risk of freezing vaccine.

## Key points

- **Vaccine potency depends on proper storage conditions.** Vaccines stored outside the recommended temperature range (either too warm or too cold) can lose potency and be ineffective at preventing disease, leaving patients vulnerable to serious illness.
- **Vaccine storage needs have increased.** The number of vaccines and combination products have increased. Extra storage space is needed during back-to-school time and in the fall when flu vaccine is distributed.
- **Stand-alone units can hold more vaccine.** There is very little usable space in a household combination unit.

## Choose the right size storage unit

It can be challenging to determine what size units your practice needs. Here are some tips:

- For a new practice, you may want to purchase one pharmaceutical combination unit or one stand-alone fridge and one stand-alone freezer until your patient population is established. As your practice grows, you need to determine if your current units are still adequate. You may need additional vaccine storage space.
- If you need to replace a storage unit, consider whether the older unit had adequate space. Was the unit often overcrowded? Were vaccines packed too tightly without adequate circulation? At times did you find vaccine pushed to the back against the walls of the storage unit? If so, you likely need a larger unit (or two smaller units).

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