



REFRIGERATED MEDICATIONS, BIOLOGICS, AND VACCINES

Interior Health would like to acknowledge that it operates and provides services on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Dăkelh Dené, Ktunaxa, Nlaka'pamux, Secwépemc, St'át'imc, syilx, and Tšilhqot'in Nations.

Interior Health recognizes that a diverse workplace includes all people, particularly those belonging to historically, systemically, and/or persistently marginalized groups, as well as individuals with protected characteristics under the B.C. Human Rights Code.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

To support safety, quality of care, and effective clinical outcomes through safe storage and monitoring of refrigerated or frozen medications, [Biologics](#), and [Vaccines](#).

1.2 Applicability

[Employees](#) in Interior Health facilities, programs, and service areas.

1.3 Scope

This policy covers the requirements for storage of refrigerated or frozen medications, [Biologics](#), and [Vaccines](#) to protect the [Cold Chain](#) integrity, equipment maintenance and data stewardship.

This policy does not apply to storage of medications, [Biologics](#), and [Vaccines](#) in public health areas. Refer instead to [Management of Biological Products](#).

2.0 POLICY

- 2.1 Refrigeration equipment, power supply, and the surrounding environment are maintained to ensure reliable performance and temperature stability.
- 2.2 Refrigeration equipment is authorized for pharmaceutical storage, located in a secure location, and functionally capable of maintaining required temperature ranges.
- 2.3 Purpose-built, pharmaceutical-grade refrigerators and freezers featuring forced-air circulation, continuous temperature monitoring and quick recovery capabilities to prevent temperature fluctuations are used.
 - Other types of refrigerators or freezers in use across Interior Health are replaced with a purpose-built refrigerator once at end-of-life.
- 2.4 Refrigerated medications, [Biologics](#), and [Vaccines](#) are stored in conditions that maintain their stability, potency, and safety and complies with applicable manufacturer, national, and provincial standard requirements.
- 2.5 Storage of any other items, including but not limited to food, beverages, blood, human milk, or laboratory samples, are prohibited in refrigeration equipment that stores medications, [Biologics](#), and [Vaccines](#).

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- 2.6 Temperature conditions for safe medication storage are consistently maintained within defined acceptable ranges appropriate to the products and location stored.
- 2.7 Temperature monitoring is implemented proportionate to product risk to enable timely detection and response to temperature deviations.
- 2.8 The [Cold Chain](#) is consistently maintained during storage and handling.
- 2.9 [Temperature Excursions](#) and refrigeration equipment failures are promptly identified, reported, and managed following established organizational processes.
- 2.10 Products exposed to temperatures outside acceptable ranges are not used or discarded unless assessed and approved by a qualified authority.
- 2.11 Data records are complete, accurate, retrievable, and maintained to support temperature monitoring, maintenance, and [Cold Chain](#) management.
- 2.12 Cleaning and maintenance of refrigerators and freezers are completed on a regular basis.
- 2.13 Standards and Procedures are in place for storage and monitoring refrigerated medication, [Biologics](#) and [Vaccines](#).

3.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

Program Director, Pharmacy Services

- Oversee and approve standards, procedures and education to support meeting refrigeration storage standards and [Cold Chain](#) management across IH facilities.

Manager, Clinical Operations

- Follow, implement, and uphold compliance with SOPs and escalation pathway requirements on their unit(s).
- Ensure maintenance and cleaning are performed at prescribed intervals.
- Retain records of cleaning and temperature monitoring.
- Follow up reports and/or escalations of [Cold Chain](#) incidents.

Employees

- Follow SOPs to maintain the integrity of refrigerated medications, [Biologics](#), and [Vaccines](#).
- Complete monitoring, cleaning, and maintenance tasks in line with job responsibilities and document per policy requirements.

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- Follow escalation pathways to report incidents when risks to product integrity are identified.

Environmental Services, P3 Partners, and Plant Services

- Accountable for monitoring refrigeration equipment and environmental conditions to maintain functional capacity to uphold refrigeration storage standards.
- Retain maintenance and monitoring documentation for a minimum of three years.
- Escalate service requests to external service providers to maintain and restore refrigeration equipment performance, as authorized.

4.0 COMPLIANCE

Incidents of non-compliance with this policy are investigated to identify barriers and to facilitate compliance. Evidence of disregard of policy requirements is handled as a disciplinary matter, up to and including termination of employment, services, and/or privileges.

5.0 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

This policy is reviewed every 5 years and as needed by the Policy Steward.

6.0 INQUIRIES

The regional policy library page linked in the footer lists the policy steward for each policy. If you have questions regarding the policy content, reach out to the appropriate policy steward.

All other inquiries can be directed to the policy office: IHPolicy@interiorhealth.ca

7.0 RELATED DOCUMENTS

[Monitoring Refrigerated Medications, Biologics, & Vaccines Toolkit](#)

8.0 REFERENCES

BC Centre for Disease Control. (2015). *Communicable Disease Control Manual*.

Chapter 2: Immunization; Appendix E – Management of Biologics.

http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Guidelines%20and%20Forms/Guidelines%20and%20Manuals/Epid/CD%20Manual/Chapter%202%20-%20Imms/Appendix_E_ManagementBiologics.pdf

Public Health Agency of Canada. (2015). *National Vaccine Storage and Handling Guidelines for Immunization Providers*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/national-vaccine-storage-handling-guidelines-immunization-providers-2015.html#appi>

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9.0 DEFINITIONS

TERM	DEFINITION
Biologic	Medication that is derived from living organisms (human, animal, or microorganism) such as enzymes, antibodies and hormones.
Cold Chain	Process used to maintain optimal temperature conditions during the transport, storage, and handling of medications, Vaccines or Biologics .
Employee	A person currently acting on behalf of Interior Health, inclusive of medical staff, volunteers, students, contractors and workers.
Temperature Excursion	An event in which a medication, Biologic , or Vaccine is exposed to a temperature outside of the required storage temperature range.
Vaccine	A specific type of Biologic used to prevent infectious diseases by training the immune system to recognize and fight off harmful pathogens.

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