



TO: Regional Directors, Public Health Regions
Regional Immunization Program Managers, Health Service Regions
Directors, Local Health Departments
Immunization Managers, Local Health Departments

FROM: Karen Hess, Manager
Vaccine Services Group

THRU: Jack C. Sims, Manager
Immunization Branch

DATE: June 10, 2011

SUBJECT: Texas Vaccines for Children (TVFC) Program: Varicella and Zoster Shipping Change

Yesterday afternoon the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) distributed this memo to the States regarding shipping changes to direct-ship frozen products from Merck. Please read the information below along with the two attachments on shipping of varicella and zoster vaccines. Although the state does not have zoster product, we are including the information for providers with private stock.

Effective June 6, 2011, Merck will no longer ship Varivax and Zostavax to customers on dry ice.

In the past, Varivax and Zostavax have been direct shipped by the manufacturer using dry ice. Both of these vaccines will now be packed for shipping with 6 frozen gel packs as refrigerant in the shipping containers. The vaccine shipping containers are packed according to Merck guidelines that take into account the maximum temperature to which the container will be exposed, the time in transit, and the need to keep the vaccine at the appropriate temperature during shipping.

Adequate refrigerant (frozen gel packs) in the shipping containers are designed to maintain proper temperatures for three days from the shipment date located on the packing list. The vaccine is located in the lower compartment of the shipping box. Providers must immediately open the container and store the vaccine in the freezer. To maintain potency the vaccine must be stored frozen between -58°F and +5°F (-50°C to -15°C). The diluent is located in the top compartment of the shipping box underneath the cardboard cap. Store the

diluent on arrival in a refrigerator (2°C to 8°C/36°F to 46°F) or at room temperature (20°C to 25°C/68°F to 77°F).

If the container is received after the three-day shipping time period, the provider should contact the Merck Order Management Center immediately for replacement instructions at 1-800-637-2579. Such requests for replacements must be received by Merck within 10 days of the original shipment date.

The manufacturer recommends that the vaccine NOT be stored on dry ice. Use of dry ice may subject the product to temperatures colder than -58°F (-50°C).

Immunizations programs should contact their providers and clinics with this information as soon as possible. Immunizations programs and providers can also refer to:

https://www.merckvaccines.com/Professional-Resources/Documents/announcements/New_Shipping_Package_for_VARIVAX_and_ZOSTAVAX.pdf

If we receive written guidance about the transporting of frozen vaccine we will forward that information to local health departments and health service regions. We will also add this new information to the 2011 Provider Manual, along with a recommendation for emergency transportation procedures. If you have specific questions or concerns about your shipment of frozen products, please contact the Merck Order Management Center at 1-800-637-2579.

Attachments:

Important Storage Instructions about Frozen Live Virus Vaccines: ZOSTAVAX[®] [Zoster Vaccine Live]

Important Storage Instructions about Varivax[®] : (VARICELLA Virus Vaccine Live)