

## Guidance for COVID-19 Vaccine Providers on Maximizing Vaccinations While Minimizing Wasted Doses

As vaccine availability increases and vaccination strategies evolve, the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) is offering updated guidance to vaccine providers to **minimize COVID-19 vaccine wastage while maximizing vaccination opportunities for every eligible Ohioan.**

Vaccine providers should make all reasonable efforts to minimize unused vaccine while following clinical best practices for vaccination and managing inventory. As Ohio continues to create more flexible vaccination opportunities through approaches such as walk-in, drive-thru or mobile clinics, vaccination of homebound individuals, or special off-site clinics for workplaces or community organizations, the likelihood of leaving unused doses in a vial may increase. Providers should continue to follow best practices to use every dose possible, but not at the expense of missing an opportunity to vaccinate people when they are ready to get vaccinated.

### Clinical best practices

Ensure staff understands storage, temperature, and handling requirements for each vaccine product, including how long vaccine can be held at room temperature. Consult manufacturer and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance for each vaccine product:

- [Pfizer](#)
- [Moderna](#)
- [Johnson & Johnson \(Janssen\)](#)

ODH recommends that vaccine administration ideally begin within 24 hours of receipt of a shipment and that those doses be administered within seven days. However, some vaccine outreach efforts will take longer to plan and execute. ODH supports those plans and is offering providers more flexibility to execute those plans.

Providers should be aware that recent increases to vial sizes for some vaccines and vials opened without every dose being used may contribute to vaccine at risk of being wasted. Providers should not miss any opportunities to vaccinate every eligible person who presents at a vaccination site, even if it means puncturing a multidose vial to administer vaccine without having enough people available to receive each dose.

Once punctured, multidose vials must be used within:

- Moderna: 12 hours
- Pfizer: 6 hours, 2 hours at ambient room temperature up to 25 degrees Celsius (77 degrees Fahrenheit)
- Johnson & Johnson: 6 hours, 2 hours ambient room temperature up to 25 degrees Celsius (77 degrees Fahrenheit)

### **Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine can be stored longer at refrigerator temperatures**

The Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine now can be stored at standard refrigerator temperatures for up to a month after it is thawed. [The U.S. Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\) has authorized extended refrigerator storage for the vaccine.](#) Now thawed, undiluted Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine vials can be stored in the refrigerator at 2 degrees Celsius to 8 degrees Celsius (35 degrees Fahrenheit to 46 degrees Fahrenheit) for up to one month.

Providers who currently have Pfizer vaccine stored in standard refrigerators should note that vaccine will have a new Beyond-Use Date/Time (BUD) that is one month from the date it was placed in the refrigerator. Providers should add a label to reflect the cumulative refrigeration time. For example, if vaccine has been in the refrigerator for four days, a new label can be added to reflect adding up to a total of 26 days.

The FDA has updated the Pfizer vaccine [Fact Sheet for Healthcare Providers Administering Vaccine \(Vaccination Providers\)](#) to help frontline workers understand the updated storage requirements.

## Estimating doses and planning vaccinations

Providers are encouraged to plan vaccination opportunities that offer advance scheduling and more flexible options, including walk-ins or evening and weekend hours. To mitigate risk of unused doses, providers should do the following:

- Confirm or estimate the number of vaccine recipients before each scheduled clinic whenever possible.
- Offer the ability to schedule appointments as well as the flexibility of walk-ins. Consider set standing hours or days for walk-in appointments and publicize those days and times. Consider using the last half-hour of the day for those on the waitlist or friends and family.
- Consider establishing and promoting standing vaccination days or half-days to increase the likelihood of larger numbers of people presenting for vaccination on the same day.
- Offer or be prepared to vaccinate family members or friends who accompany patients to medical visits even if they are not established patients at the vaccinating practice. *(This will require establishing a clinical process and business model and educating staff).*
- Continue outreach to employers or other community partners with a large membership or network to arrange vaccination events.
- Providers should have a contingency plan in place to offer any unused doses after a clinic to any eligible vaccine recipients ages 12 and older (parental/guardian consent required for youth ages 12-17 who are not emancipated).
- When possible, providers should send a quick public notification of first-come first-served vaccinations for the remainder of the clinic hours through social media messaging, app, email or text alerts to waitlist or existing patients.

## Transfer of unused doses

If more than 20 doses are at risk of wastage, please call the ODH Provider Call Center at 1-844-963-4829 immediately for guidance and to discuss options including, but not limited to, [transfer of vaccine to other enrolled providers](#). The movement of vaccine is not a recommended practice but is permitted between enrolled providers upon approval by ODH in special circumstances.

If leftover doses are administered, the provider giving those doses must do the following:

- The vaccine administration must be reported in [ImpactSIIS](#), including race, ethnicity and [target population or occupation \(TP/O\) data](#), within 24 hours.
- Please include these vaccinated individuals in your follow-up plans for administering second doses.

## Special considerations for vaccinations for homebound individuals

According to guidance from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC), [providers vaccinating individuals who are homebound](#) should carefully plan those appointments to understand how they can minimize unused doses and ensure safe and effective vaccination. Providers should:

- **Estimate the number of doses needed as accurately as possible.** Contact recipients or their caregivers in advance to determine those who wish to be vaccinated to best estimate how many doses will be needed. Plan to use all doses in a vial transported for home vaccination, if possible, and offer doses to caregivers or other persons in the home.
- **Map out travel plans** to ensure vaccine is utilized within the approved time frames for the use of vaccine at different temperatures, including factoring in pre-vaccination preparation time and post-vaccination observation time.
- **Ensure readiness to maintain, monitor, and report the temperature of vaccine** from the time the vaccine is taken out of a clinic facility, during transportation, and up to the time, that vaccine is administered.

## Proper Disposal of Expired or Unusable Vaccine

Vaccine providers should follow the steps below to properly discard expired or unusable vaccine when vaccine product is determined to be unusable for reasons including temperature excursions, accidents, or expiration. Determining when a vaccine or diluent expires is a critical step in proper storage and handling.

- Expired vaccines and diluents should be removed immediately from storage units to avoid inadvertently administering them.
- COVID-19 vaccine that is exposed to temperature excursions may be determined to be spoiled by vaccine manufacturers. If providers have COVID-19 vaccine determined to be spoiled, wasted, or unusable for another reason, the provider must remove the vaccine from the storage unit to avoid administration errors.
- Manufacturers may have specific guidance on how to handle expired or compromised vaccines. However, open or broken vials and vaccine pre-drawn by providers cannot be returned and should be discarded.
- Providers should dispose of vaccine waste in accordance with local regulations and processes used to dispose of regulated infectious waste. For more information on disposing of infectious waste, visit the [Ohio EPA website](#).
- Providers should report all wasted/unused doses to the Vaccine Order Management System (VOMS) according to page 3 of the inventory adjustment [guidance](#) .

*Updated May 24, 2021.*

For additional information, visit [coronavirus.ohio.gov](https://coronavirus.ohio.gov).

*Please call the ODH Provider Call Center between 8 a.m. – 7 p.m. Monday through Friday at 1-844-9ODHVAX (1-844-963-4829) or email [COVIDVACCINE@odh.ohio.gov](mailto:COVIDVACCINE@odh.ohio.gov). You also may visit the ODH [COVID-19 Vaccine Provider Information Training page](#) for additional information and resources.*

For more information, visit: [coronavirus.ohio.gov](https://coronavirus.ohio.gov)