

## Transporting vaccines appropriately

### *Update to Health Care Professionals as of September 26, 2017*

Vaccines are sensitive and costly biological agents and must be treated with care. All vaccines must be stored and transported at a temperature between 2°C to 8°C from the moment they are produced, through distribution, right up until the moment the vaccine is administered to the patient. Any break in this “cold chain” may destroy the vaccine or make it ineffective.

The correct temperature can be challenging to maintain when transporting vaccines. Follow these steps to prevent vaccines from losing potency or being wasted.

#### **Use Ministry-approved hard-sided coolers and packing materials**

Hard-sided coolers are the **only** approved type of cooler effective at keeping vaccines at the correct temperature. Other containers should not be used to transport vaccines unless they are internally validated by York Region Public Health and approved by the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care. Soft-sided coolers are not valid transport containers and will result in delays with your vaccine pick up. York Region Public Health can provide, on request and availability, hard-sided coolers and all necessary transport materials, including digital thermometers, ice packs, flexible water blankets, and bubble wrap to safely transport vaccines.

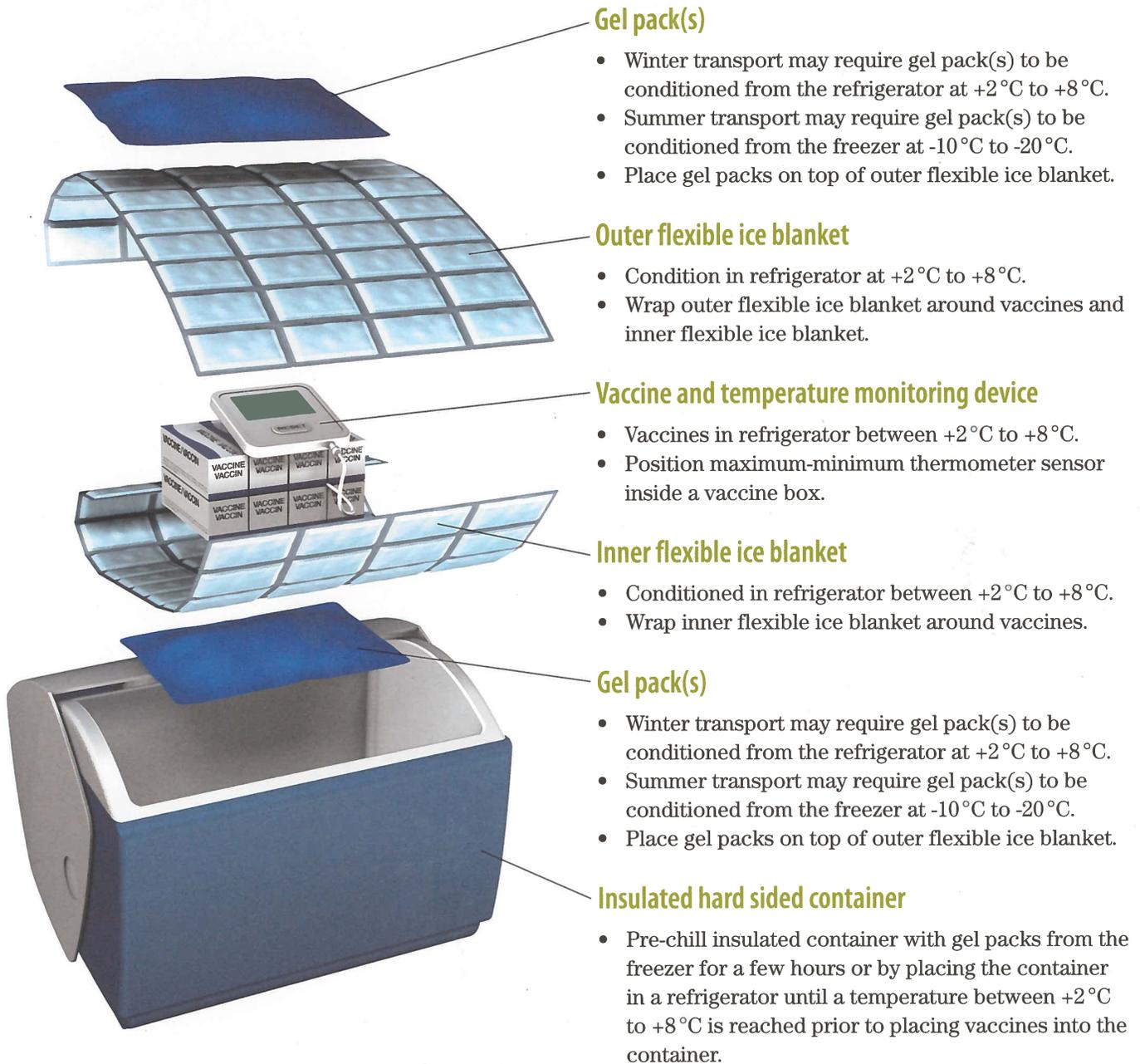
#### **Pre-condition coolers before coming to pick-up vaccines**

Coolers don't always stay cool, especially if left in a hot or cold environment. A cooler inside a car in the summer will be too warm to use, while in the winter it can become too cold. Before transporting vaccines, make sure the cooler is ready by pre-conditioning it to a temperature between 2°C to 8°C. To keep it cool when temperatures are warm or hot, place ice packs, flexible water blankets and bubble wrap inside the cooler to achieve the correct temperature for vaccine storage before driving to pick-up locations. It can take up to 60 minutes for a cooler to be pre-conditioned, depending on the size of the cooler. When temperatures are cold, you can control the temperature by using a variation of ice packs and flexible water blankets. Always ensure that vaccines are not in direct contact with ice packs as it may cause the vaccines to freeze.

For questions or guidance on vaccine storage, contact:

**York Region Public Health – Vaccine Inventory** at **1-877-464-9675 ext. 74065** or visit [york.ca/immunization](http://york.ca/immunization) and click on [Vaccination Information for Health Care Professionals](#).

## Detailed instructions on how to pack an insulated container:



Note: Additional icepacks may be required depending on cold-life needed for the length of transport. Additional insulating material (e.g., bubble wrap, Styrofoam chips, crumpled or shredded newspaper) should be placed inside (bottom, top and sides) the insulated container to allow for cool air circulation.

