

Manual Defrost Storage Units

The CDC currently recommends stand alone refrigerators and stand alone freezers for vaccine storage. The CDC recommends auto defrost (self-defrosting) units, but alternatively, **if a provider used a manual defrost, he/she should have another storage unit for temporary storage that is capable of maintaining correct temperatures to place the vaccine in while defrosting the main unit.**

The following is a suggested procedure for defrosting a manual defrost unit:

It is normal for ice and frost to accumulate inside the freezer (and even refrigerator compartment depending on the type of storage unit). A thin layer of frost does not affect the cooling performance but a thick layer will affect the unit's ability to maintain temperature efficiently and will eventually cause unit failure. If defrosting is necessary every month or more frequently, check the seals on the doors or call a technician for necessary maintenance.

1. Check the inside walls of the freezer weekly
 - a. When frost has accumulated to a thickness of approximately 1 cm, the unit requires defrosting
 - b. The more the unit is opened and closed, the more frost will build quicker
 - c. Follow the manufacturer's specific recommendations for defrosting a freezer
2. Remove all vaccine (from both compartments if using a combination refrigerator/freezer)
3. Place all vaccine in an alternate storage unit(s) that will maintain correct temperatures
4. Turn off the power to the unit you are defrosting and unplug the unit
5. Remove all frozen packs (keep frozen if possible)
6. Keeping the freezer door open, allow the frost to melt
7. Remove loose ice by hand to speed up the process but do not use sharp tools
8. Defrosting time can be reduced by placing a container of warm water (not boiling hot) inside the compartment
9. Once the frost is melted completely, clean the freezer compartment thoroughly and wipe dry
10. Clean refrigerator compartment as well
11. Connect the power; ensure that the thermostat is turned on and set correctly
12. Wait for temperature to stabilize at the proper range before returning vaccine to defrosted unit. This may take hours or even a day depending on the unit, so monitor with a calibrated temperature monitoring device.
13. Monitor and record the temperature frequently (every hour for several hours)
14. Re-stock the unit with vaccine once the temperature is stabilized
15. Continue to monitor the temperature after the vaccine is returned to the unit.