

COVID-19 Vaccination: Building Global Capacity

Q&A for Session 10: Supply and logistics

Tuesday, April 13, 2021

Thank you for attending the above session for Health workers. Many questions were submitted by participants, either in the Zoom chat during the session itself, or in the two Telegram channels managed by Technet-21 supporting regions, countries, and partners in preparing for COVID-19 vaccine introduction. In this document, we share the answers from presenters to each question.

Links to the session recordings in all languages and presentations can be found on the [Project ECHO website](#).

More information on COVID-19 vaccine introduction can be found in the resources listed below.

- [General questions regarding the COVID-19 vaccines](#)
- [Preparing for COVID-19 vaccination](#)
- [WHO Coronavirus disease \(COVID-2019\) technical guidance](#)
- [TechNet-21 – The Technical Network for Strengthening Immunization Services](#)
- OpenWHO COVID-19 vaccine trainings:
 - [COVID-19 vaccination training for health workers](#)

In addition, TechNet-21 manages two Telegram channels supporting regions, countries, and partners in preparing for COVID-19 vaccine introduction. In these two spaces - one anglophone and one francophone - you will be able to share your experiences, discuss key questions, and connect with experts from around the world. We'll also share new information and global guidance as it becomes available. Join us today:

- [COVID-19 Vaccine Introduction – TechNet-21 \(English\)](#)
- [Introduction des vaccins contre la Covid-19 – TechNet-21 \(Français\)](#)

Are there any COVID-19 vaccines that can handle the heat?

It is unclear what temperature the question is referring to. In general, COVID-19 vaccines are sensitive biological substances that can get damaged if they are exposed to temperatures (heat and/or cold) outside of the required temperature range for the specific product. For example, for thawed and unpunctured vial of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, the maximum heat/time exposure is up to +30°C, for the duration of up to 2 hours. For the diluted Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, chemical and physical in-use stability has been demonstrated at up to +30°C for the duration of 6 hours. For all vaccines, it is important to adhere to their specific cold chain and handling requirements, as failure to do so may reduce vaccine potency and result in lack of protection against COVID-19.

If the vaccine gets out the temperature range for an hour, can it be recovered?

Once lost, vaccine potency cannot be recovered. It is therefore of utmost importance to adhere to cold chain and handling requirements specific for each product.

Can the Pfizer vaccine return from room temperature to 2-8?

Shelf life for thawed and undiluted/unpunctured Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine is 2 hours if a vial is held at the temperature range from +2 to +30 °C. If the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine has been diluted, the vaccine's shelf life after dilution is 6 hours at the temperature range from +2 to +30 °C. For more information on shelf life and special precautions for storage visit WHO EUL product information https://extranet.who.int/pqweb/sites/default/files/documents/Comirnaty-COVID-19-vaccine-injection_package-insert.pdf

Is it true that vaccines shipped to our countries will only have 3-4 months shelf life? Would you recommend we don't even try to use these vaccines in the hinterlands and far out health centres?

While monitoring and complying with COVID-19 vaccines' expiration dates is crucial, storage and handling conditions may impact the remaining shelf life of a specific vaccine. For example, countries that have opted to receive already thawed COVID-19 vaccine Janssen due to their limited cold chain capacity, will receive the vaccine with an updated expiration date. This is because COVID-19 vaccine Janssen, once thawed, can be stored in the refrigerator from +2 to +8 °C for a single period of up to 3 months and has to be used within that time. Good and coordinated planning at all levels of the immunization programme is essential to ensure full utilization of vaccines. As a general rule, vaccines should be tracked for expiration dates and stocks rotated, so that vaccines with the earliest expiration dates are used first. Additionally, for COVID-19 vaccines expiration dates may change as additional stability data become available.

Can you use a shake test for COVID-19 vaccines?

The shake test is used to determine if freeze-sensitive vaccines containing aluminium-based adjuvants (such as liquid formulations of DTP, Pentavalent, Hepatitis B vaccines) have been frozen and are therefore damaged. COVID-19 vaccines do not contain aluminium-based or any other adjuvant, and the shake test does not apply to them. Once thawed COVID-19 vaccines (such as Pfizer, Moderna and Janssen COVID-19 vaccines) should not be re-frozen. AstraZeneca vaccine should not be frozen. Effective

temperature control during storage and transport of vaccines, and adhering to recommended temperatures while vaccine is in use, remains critical to ensure their potency and safety.