SCOPE:
All Patient Care Units and areas

PURPOSE:
To provide for the proper and safe storage of medications, patient nourishment, employee food and laboratory specimens in clinical areas.

POLICY:
Medications, food and nutrition products, and laboratory specimens will be stored under proper conditions of sanitation, temperature, light, moisture, ventilation, and security to maintain product stability.

PROCEDURE:
A. Cleaning: Refrigerators will be cleaned according to the following schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Refrigerator Type</th>
<th>Department Responsible for Cleaning</th>
<th>Cleaning Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medication Refrigerators</td>
<td>Interior Surface– Pharmacy</td>
<td>Checked daily by Pharmacy techs for spills/cleaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exterior Surface – Environmental Services</td>
<td>Full cleaning monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monthly, or as needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient Nutrition Refrigerators/Freezers</td>
<td>Interior and exterior surfaces - Nutrition Services</td>
<td>Monthly, or as needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lab Specimen Refrigerators</td>
<td>Environmental Services</td>
<td>Monthly, or as needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Food Refrigerators/Freezers</td>
<td>Environmental Services</td>
<td>Monthly, or as needed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Storage - Patient Food Refrigerators
1. Only patient food may be stored in patient refrigerators.
2. All food must be properly labeled, dated, and covered as follows:
   a. Patient name
   b. Date (date item placed in refrigerator)
   c. Expiration dates:
i. Prepared in hospital: will be discarded in two calendar days (e.g., food placed in refrigerator on 12/1 should be discarded on 12/3).

ii. Food from outside hospital: will be discarded in 1 calendar day (exception: commercially frozen food, such as ice cream, is good for 3 months when maintained in the freezer).

C. Temperature Monitoring:
   1. Refrigerator temperatures are to be maintained according to the table below.
   2. Refrigerators and freezers will be monitored according to the table below, using either:
      a. An electronic, alarmed thermometer with high/low settings:
         i. The high/low settings on the electronic thermometers will be set according to the temperature parameters listed in the table below.
         ii. Refrigerator and freezer temperatures will be monitored by department/unit staff on an ongoing basis using the electronic, alarmed thermometer. An audible alarm will sound if the internal temperature is outside of the pre-established parameters.
         iii. The thermometers are outfitted with a historical minimum/maximum temperature memory that will alert staff to temperatures that have fallen outside of the established range.
         iv. When a department is closed, the minimum/maximum temperature memory is to be checked on the next business day.
         v. Internal refrigerator thermometer glycol bottle probes are to be located in the central part of the refrigerator, never on the door or in the front.
      b. A thermometer with a continuous circular chart temperature recorder:
         i. The circular chart thermometers are outfitted with a historical minimum/maximum temperature memory that will alert staff to temperatures that have fallen outside of the temperature parameters listed in the table below.
         ii. Refrigerator and freezer temperatures will be monitored by department/unit staff on an ongoing basis as staff will visualize temperature readings that fall outside of the established range when accessing items in the refrigerator or freezer.
         iii. When a department is closed, the minimum/maximum temperature memory is to be checked on the next business day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Refrigerator/Freezer Category</th>
<th>Temperature Parameters (Fahrenheit)</th>
<th>Department to be notified if refrigerator temperature is out of compliance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laboratory/Specimen</td>
<td>36 to 46</td>
<td>Transport all specimens directly to the Lab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medication</td>
<td>36 to 46</td>
<td>Pharmacy &amp; Maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient Food</td>
<td>34 to 40 refrigerator -20 to 20 freezer</td>
<td>Nutritional Services &amp; Maintenance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Corrective action if temperatures are found outside the given parameters:
a. Should the audible alarm sound or the historical minimum/maximum temperature memory reflect that the internal temperature has been outside of the pre-established parameters indicating that the temperature has fallen outside of the established range, staff are to:
   i. Check to be sure the thermometer probe is appropriately located (refer to step C.2.v. above). If not, the thermometer probe is to be relocated and the temperature should be rechecked in 30 minutes. If the refrigerator is warm or obviously not functional, proceed to step iii immediately.
   ii. If the thermometer is appropriately located, the thermostat should be adjusted as indicated. The temperature should be rechecked in 30 minutes. If the refrigerator is warm, or obviously not functional, proceed to step iii immediately.
   iii. If temperature is out of range despite above actions, notify Departments as noted in the above table for any needed subsequent action.
   iv. Laboratory, Pharmacy, Nutritional Services – once notified, will make arrangements for appropriate storage. In addition, Dietary will remove and discard all refrigerated food items.
   v. Laboratory Specimen Refrigerators in Clinical Areas Outside the Laboratory
      1. In the event of a suspected refrigerator problem, all specimens must be sent directly to the lab or stored in another unit’s refrigerator until the equipment is repaired or replaced.
      2. If a large influx of specimens is sent to the laboratory as a result, the lab supervisor is notified to expect immediate reception of the increased volume of specimens for processing.