

**By Carolyn Lee**

***The Imperial Republican***

Nebraska has had its first laboratory-confirmed case of influenza for 2008, according to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. The case is in Lancaster County.

Dr. Joann Schaefer, Chief Medical Officer, said “The best thing you can do to protect yourself from it is to get your flu shot.”

There are several options for adults and children in Chase County for influenza vaccinations.

The Chase County Immunization Clinic, which is free to children up to age 18, offers the flu shots, as well as other vaccinations.

A clinic will be held Saturday, Dec. 20 beginning at 9:15 a.m. in the east specialty clinic at Chase County Community Hospital (CCCH).

Appointments are recommended, as it helps the clinic staff to stock enough vaccine, and ensures an even flow of clients.

The location of the clinic has been moved from St. Patrick’s Catholic Church Fellowship Hall, due to construction in the area.

Parents of children don’t need to check in with CCCH staff. They may proceed directly to the specialty clinic area.

Beginning in January, the clinic will be held the first Saturday of every month, beginning at 9:15 a.m., at the hospital, rather than the Fellowship Hall.

Influenza vaccinations are also available for \$25 at Chase County Clinic, located on the north end of CCCH.

No appointment is needed. Persons wishing to get a shot may just walk in between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Influenza leads to 200,000 hospitalizations and 36,000 deaths in the United States every year.

The very young, the very old and those with compromised immune systems are most susceptible to viruses. Getting the flu can lead to pneumonia—a frequent cause of death among the elderly.

Antibiotics won’t work in viruses like influenza. Antibiotics won’t make a patient feel better, recover quicker or keep others from getting sick.

Widespread use of antibiotics is fueling an increase in drug-resistant bacteria.

“Antibiotics are not a cure-all,” Dr. Schaefer said. “They just don’t work at all on viruses.”

It is especially important to get a flu shot now, as the holiday season approaches. That’s when parties occur and people mingle and spread viruses.

National Influenza Vaccination Week is being observed this week.