



**By Carolyn Lee**  
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Hospitals and clinics are preparing for the upcoming seasonal and H1N1 influenza season, and the public should, too. That's the message from Chase County Community Hospital and Chase County Clinic.

CCCH and its clinics are implementing some new precautionary measures to ensure a safe environment and protect patients, visitors, employees and medical staff during the influenza season.

Administrator Lola Jones said the precautions will go into effect "when we actually have cases." CCCH and clinics will adjust schedules for individuals seen in the clinics and emergency room.

Both Imperial and Wauneta Clinics will begin seeing patients needing routine wellness exams and having non-respiratory ailments in the morning. Patients with potentially infectious respiratory illness will be seen in the afternoon. Saturday visits will continue to be scheduled for acute needs only.

All patients are being encouraged to call prior to coming in. The nursing staff will be asking a series of questions to patients in order to assess an appropriate time for them to see the providers.

In situations where assistance related to respiratory ailments is needed after clinic hours, the public is being asked to call in before coming to the emergency room, so the best course of action can be determined.

### **Temporary visitor restriction**

CCCH will be implementing a temporary visitor restriction during flu season. Again, this will take place when influenza cases have been confirmed in the county. The hospital's web site will post notice of the effective dates.

Persons under age 14 will not be allowed to visit in patient care areas such as patient rooms, therapy areas and outpatient services areas. Research indicates that young people are the more at-risk population as carriers and transmitters of the seasonal flu and H1N1.

Additional suggestions for those visiting the hospital include:

Don't visit if exhibiting signs of possible flu (fever, cough, sneezing, runny nose);

Wash hands often. Sinks, soap and hand sanitizers are available in all rooms and throughout the hospital and clinic;

Cover nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing;

Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth;

Persons with outpatient appointments in other facilities operated by the hospital will be asked to come to the appointments without their children.

### **Mass vaccination**

The seasonal mass vaccination clinic will be held Oct. 3 at the Chase County Fairgrounds, as in the past. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is encouraging all persons to receive the

seasonal vaccination earlier this year.

After the mass vaccination, the seasonal vaccine will be available by contacting the clinics.

H1N1 vaccination will be separate from the seasonal mass vaccination. The CDC doesn't have an exact release date for the vaccine, but Lori Mendenhall of CCCH said it will probably be mid to late October.

Those vaccinations will be available through the Imperial and Wauneta clinics.

Since the H1N1 vaccination is new to the human body, two shots will be required. Mendenhall said they are spaced three to four weeks apart.

CCCH will inform the public about vaccination dates through the media and the hospital web site at <http://chasecountyhospital.com/>.

### **Those at risk**

The CDC has targeted certain individuals at a higher risk for H1N1 and recommends the following groups to receive the 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine:

Pregnant women, because they are at higher risk of complications and can potentially provide protection to infants who cannot be vaccinated;

Household contacts and caregivers for children younger than six months of age, because younger infants are at higher risk of influenza-related complications and cannot be vaccinated;

Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel, because infections among healthcare workers have been reported and this can be a potential source of infection for vulnerable patients;

All people from six months through 24 years of age, because cases of 2009 H1N1 influenza have been seen in children who are in close contact with each other in school, day care, study, and who are a mobile population.

No shortage of 2009 H1N1 vaccine is expected, but availability and demand can be unpredictable. In addition, the vaccine may initially be available in limited quantities.

The CDC recommends prioritizing who should first receive the vaccine in the above group if the vaccine is initially produced in limited quantities.