

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that everyone six months and older get a flu vaccine each year. Getting a flu vaccine is the first and most important step in protecting against the serious disease.

It's especially important for certain groups to get vaccinated. People who have asthma, diabetes, chronic lung disease, pregnant women and people 65 years and older should receive the vaccination because they are at a higher risk of developing pneumonia if they get sick.

CDC recommends that people get vaccinated against influenza as soon as the 2012-2013 flu season vaccine becomes available in their community. Influenza seasons are unpredictable, and can begin as early as October. It takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body and provide protection against the flu.

A flu vaccine is needed every year because flu viruses are constantly changing. It's not unusual for new flu viruses to appear each year. The flu vaccine is formulated each year to keep up with the flu viruses as they change.

Also, multiple studies conducted over different seasons and across vaccine types and influenza virus subtypes have shown that the body's immunity to influenza viruses (acquired either through natural infection or vaccination) declines over time.

Getting vaccinated each year provides the best protection against influenza throughout flu season.

Chase County Hospital and Clinics are offering four special times for citizens to receive their influenza vaccination.

A "drive thru" vaccination will be available for those with Medicare on Friday, Oct. 12, from 1 to 4 p.m. at the Wauneta Clinic and Saturday, Oct. 13, from 9 a.m. to 12 noon at the Imperial Clinic.

Those taking advantage of the "drive-thru" vaccinations must bring their Medicare cards with them, according to hospital staff.

The vaccine will be offered to families with insurance and those paying cash on Monday, Oct. 22, from 4 to 6:30 p.m. at the Imperial Clinic and Thursday, Nov. 1, from 4 to 6:30 p.m. at the Wauneta Clinic. These will be walk-in times.

Those who miss these opportunities can still receive vaccinations through the Wauneta and Imperial Clinic during regular clinic hours. For more information, contact the Chase County Clinic at 882-7299.