

Get a flu vaccine.

Flu is here and it's ahead of schedule according to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Lab tests confirmed influenza B in Douglas County.

"Flu showed up a little early this season," said Dr. Joann Schaefer, Nebraska's Chief Medical Officer and Director of Public Health for DHHS. "Make sure getting vaccinated is at the top of your to-do list. Flu vaccine not only protects you, but your family, friends and coworkers too."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends flu vaccine for everyone six months and older. After being vaccinated, it takes about two weeks for the body to build immunity.

While flu can make anyone sick, certain people are at greater risk for serious complications, and it's extremely important they receive vaccine:

- Young children
- Older people
- People with chronic lung disease (like asthma and COPD), diabetes (type 1 and 2), heart disease, neurologic conditions and certain other long-term health conditions
- Pregnant women

Flu vaccine is safe, effective and rigorously tested. Remember, it's a myth that people can get flu from the shot. The most common reaction is soreness and redness at the injection site. If a person doesn't like needles, FluMist is a nasal spray available for healthy people two to 49 years old.

DHHS officially started flu surveillance Sept. 30. Surveillance shows where the flu is and how fast it's spreading across the state.

DHHS uses multiple surveillance systems to track flu viruses, including sentinel physicians who report the number of people with flu-like illness weekly, lab tests, school surveillance, hospital data, emergency department data and death reporting.