Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) established National Influenza Vaccination Week in 2005 to highlight the importance of continuing flu vaccination through the holiday season and beyond.

Influenza is a respiratory infection that can cause serious illness and complications, lead to hospitalization and sometimes even death. Every flu season is different, and an influenza infection can affect people differently. Even healthy people can get very sick from the flu and spread it to others. Flu shots are the most effective way to prevent influenza and its complications. CDC recommends that everyone 6 months of age or older be vaccinated annually against influenza. Getting an annual flu shot assures that you’re getting the most up-to-date vaccine formulation.

Getting vaccinated not only protects you, but also helps protect high risk members of your family and the community and those who are unable to receive a vaccination. High risk groups include seniors, young children, and those with medical conditions. Children under 6 months, persons allergic to the flu vaccine formulation and those with immunosuppressive conditions are unable to be vaccinated.

Over the past few years, influenza vaccine has prevented millions of flu cases and tens of thousands of related hospitalizations, according to the CDC. “Flu season” in the United States can begin as early as October and last as late as May. It’s not too late to protect yourself and those around you. Because it’s December it is even more of a reason to get your flu vaccine now. It takes two weeks for your immune system to develop peak protection. The flu vaccine isn't perfect, and it doesn't guarantee 100 percent that you won't get influenza, but it still remains your best protection against the flu.

You can get a flu vaccination even if you don’t have a regular doctor. Flu vaccinations are offered in many locations, including clinics, health departments, retail stores and pharmacies. It is not possible to predict how mild or severe the 2016-2017 season will be, so please take the time to protect yourself and the people around you by getting your annual flu vaccination.

The Monongalia County Health Department vaccination program offers standard flu shots as well as the “High Dose” flu shot specifically developed for seniors. For more information call 304-598-5119.