Do I need the flu shot?

It may seem a bit early to be thinking about a flu shot, but it’s the right time if you’re thinking about opting out this year. Who needs a flu shot? The answer is most everyone! That is why UT Extension is reminding everyone during Immunization Awareness Month.

According to CDC, most everyone 6 months or older should receive a flu vaccine every year. Influenza vaccines help give protection against the 3 or 4 viruses expected to be most prevalent in the coming season.

Avoiding the flu is important, not only to protect your health but also that of family members. The flu is a highly contagious respiratory disease caused by influenza viruses. Fever, cough, shaking chills, body aches and extreme weakness are common symptoms. These viruses can make even healthy people very sick and lead to thousands of hospitalizations and deaths every year.

Some people need this vaccine to avoid developing serious complications from the flu. These include adults age 65 and older, young children under 5 years of age, pregnant women and people with certain health conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease or asthma, and persons who live in long term care facilities.

However, there are a few people who cannot get the vaccine. Consult your health care provider before getting the shot if you have a serious allergic reaction to eggs or a previous dose of the flu vaccine, a history of Guillain-Barre Syndrome, or you are ill with a fever. The influenza vaccine is not approved for use in children younger than 6 months of age.

Contact your insurance provider to learn if the vaccine is covered. If you are a beneficiary of Medicare, Part B will pay for the shot when given at approved locations.

The best time for vaccination against the flu is autumn. Flu season can begin as early as October and last until May. It generally takes 1 to 2 weeks for protection from the vaccine to begin, which lasts for at least 6 to 8 months. Decide today to get your flu shot this fall.