

# Fall is all pumpkin spice and flu shots

## Senior Beat

Carol Higgins Taylor



I've been fighting the notion that Labor Day is the end of summer. I refuse to buy into that propaganda. I can hang on to summer a little longer, especially with the balmy temperatures we've been experiencing. But I have noticed that my deck is accumulating more leaves lately, and the vibrant green color of the trees is now more muted with tinges of gold and orange.

Seems fall is approaching without me. "Well, if you can't beat 'em, join 'em," as my mother is fond of saying. So it's pumpkin spice coffee and caramel apples for me. And on the upside, I found a fabulous new fall purse.

But this season is not all foliage and craft fairs. Germs lurk among us. Yes, this is a reminder to get your flu shot.

It is the best protection from the flu that we have. Just being in close proximity to a sneeze or a cough can spell trouble. Maybe the person has allergies but it could be a cold or influenza. Take the fear out of the flying germ equation and get a flu shot.

There are other things you can do to reduce your risk of getting sick this season.

Keep your hands clean. Wash them well, not just a quick rinse under running water. Of course, if hand washing is not possible, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. You cannot have too many bottles of these germ fighters around so stock up. You never know when you'll be forced to shake hands with someone who has a prominently runny nose and dry cough. Keep a bottle in your car and your purse so it will be handy. And for men, there are packets of disinfecting wipes that can slip easily in back pockets.

If you think about all the things in your daily life that have been repeatedly touched by possibly infected people, hand washing is a must. Germs can live on surfaces from doorknobs to money to items in grocery stores for hours, even days.

Most importantly, in your war on the flu, is to keep your hands away from your face. If you have touched something that has been touched by an infected person, and then you rub your eyes or nose, the virus on your fingers has just found an entryway into your whole body and will set up shop.

But careful though you may be, remember the flu virus is also air-borne, so if you happen to be in the path of a random coughing jag or sneezing fit by an infected person, you could get sick. Try to keep at least three feet between you and a sneeze or cough. Colds are uncomfortable and annoying but

the flu can cause complications such as bronchitis and pneumonia quickly in seniors, which can be life threatening, and delaying treatment can make matters worse.

Other complications of flu can be ear infections, sinus infections, dehydration, and worsening of chronic medical conditions, such as congestive heart failure, asthma, or diabetes.

Again, one of the best ways to guard against influenza is by having a flu shot, and while getting one is not a one hundred percent guarantee that you won't contract the virus, your vaccination will ensure that your symptoms will be reduced.

Influenza can cause fever, chills, headache, dry cough, runny or stuffy nose, sore throat, and muscle aches, and extreme fatigue lasting several days to more than a week.

Call your health care provider or go to one of the numerous clinics being held in the area. Watch your newspaper for times and places. The vaccine is covered by Medicare so bring your card with you.

And ask your health care provider about the pneumonia shot. Remember that even if you have the flu shot, you must keep those hands clean and away from your face as there's no injection to prevent the common cold.

Carol Higgins Taylor is an advocate for seniors and owns Bryant Street Public Relations in Bangor. Email her at seniorbeat@gmail.com.

# Maine educator receives the 2016 Wilma Award

BY MEG HASKELL  
BDN STAFF

In the 1940s, when Esther Rauch was growing up in Mobile, Alabama, a beloved aunt came to visit her every Saturday. Dressed up in their good clothes, the two would step into the quiet parlor, close the door and settle down in front of the Philco radio to listen to a live opera broadcast on the Texaco Radio Theater of the Air.

It was a ritual that gave rise to a lifelong passion.

"I still listen to opera every Saturday afternoon," Rauch said in a recent interview. When she's at home in Glenburn, she primarily listens via Maine Public Broadcasting. Once in awhile she attends a live event in New York City or elsewhere.

But 10 times per year, during the performance season of the Collins Center for the Arts at the University of Maine campus in Orono, Rauch and her husband, Chick, can be

found in their longtime seats at the rear of the 1,400-seat concert hall, soaking up a live-broadcast production of The Met: Live in HD. And on Sept. 17, at the Collins Center's annual opening gala, Rauch was honored for her role in promoting the live opera broadcasts and the performing arts overall in Greater Bangor.

Ten years ago, the Metropolitan Opera launched its innovative live-broadcast series, beaming powerful performances from the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York City to local movie theaters and other venues around the country. New theater partners have signed on each year since; The Met: Live in HD now airs in more than 2,000 theaters in 70 nations.

Here in Maine, there are nine venues, including The Waterville Opera House, The Grand Theater in Ellsworth and The Collins Center for the Arts. For about \$25, Mainers can enjoy current Met produc-



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**Esther Rauch, longtime advocate for education and the arts, will be honored at the opening night gala of the Collins Center for the Arts for her work in promoting opera.**

tions on the big screen, enhanced with detailed onstage closeups, intimate backstage interviews and other enrich-

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