Despite RFK Jr.’s shenanigans, COVID shot access will be a lot like last year

In an interview with Ars Technica in August, Brigid Groves, vice president of professional affairs for the American Pharmacists Association (APhA) signaled that efforts to limit access to COVID-19 vaccines is concerning to APhA, which is the leading organization representing pharmacists.

“We are concerned about that because the data and evidence point to the fact that this vaccine is safe and effective for [young, otherwise healthy] patients,” Groves said. “So, to suddenly arbitrarily limit that is very concerning to us.”

And, with the CDC’s permissive recommendations, pharmacies are *not* limiting them. Representatives for both CVS and Walgreens told The Washington Post that they would not require patients under 65 to prove they have an underlying condition to get a COVID-19 vaccine. CVS won’t ask you to self-attest to having a condition, and Walgreens also said that it won’t require any proof.

“In simplest terms, if a patient wants to get the vaccine, they’ll get it,” Amy Thibault, a CVS spokesperson, told the Post.

With the shared decision-making, there may be extra forms about risks and benefits that might take an extra few minutes, but it should otherwise be just like past years.

On Tuesday, this reporter was able to easily book same-day appointments for an updated COVID-19 vaccine at local CVS and Walgreens pharmacies in North Carolina, without attesting to any medical conditions.

Children

Shots for younger children could be trickier: While adults and older children can visit their pharmacy and get vaccinated relatively easily, younger children (particularly those under age 5) may have a harder time. Pharmacists typically do not vaccinate those younger children—which has always been the case—and parents will have to visit the pediatrician.

Pediatricians, like pharmacists, are likely to be supportive of broad access to the shots. The American Academy of Pediatrics has said that all children should have access. The AAP also specifically encourages children under age 2 and children with underlying conditions to get vaccinated, because those children are at higher risk of severe disease.

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