The quick guide to fall vaccines and when you should get them

Labor Day is in the rearview mirror, kids are back to school, and a squall of pumpkin spice is upon us. It’s that time again to prepare for the equally inevitable respiratory virus season with annual vaccines.

With fervent anti-vaccine activist Robert F. Kennedy Jr. as the country’s top health official, it might seem like the rollout of this year’s shots could be a disaster. For instance, one of Kennedy’s first actions as health secretary last year was to obliterate an ad campaign for flu shots amid a particularly deadly flu season. As we head into this fall, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s vaccine advisory committee—which normally sets vaccination recommendations and insurance coverage for the shots—is nonfunctioning. A federal judge ruled in March that the anti-vaccine allies Kennedy installed on the panel were illegally appointed and unfit to serve. All their changes to vaccine policy have been temporarily voided. And meanwhile, Kennedy spent last week trying to obscure the number of babies who died from measles so far this year (it was two, including a newborn).

Big picture

Despite all of that, the fall vaccine effort is looking like it will likely be somewhat smooth, potentially unremarkable even. The Food and Drug Administration has approved updated flu and COVID-19 shots for this season. Those shots have already begun arriving at pharmacies—in case your pharmacy hasn’t already sent you multiple texts and reminders. While

there are still some snags for access, it seems like it will be a lot like last year’s fall vaccine rollout.

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