

## HPV shot can be hard to find

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Some U.S. physicians aren't stocking the new vaccine to prevent cervical cancer because they said insurers won't pay enough for them to immunize patients.

"This is a national issue that is affecting lots of people," Dr. Benjamin Gitterman, president of the Washington chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, told The Washington Post. "It's a matter of cash flow."

Pediatricians told the newspaper that insurance companies willing to cover Gardasil vaccine will sometimes pay doctors \$2 more than the \$122 per shot cost to doctors, not enough to cover their costs.

"I have to pay for nursing time, supplies, syringes, alcohol pads, dropped doses and time to explain it," Poughkeepsie, N.Y., pediatrician Dr. Herschel R. Lessin told the newspaper. "And when insurance companies decide to pay me \$122 per dose and take three months to pay, I can't afford to do it. For insurance companies that are paying me \$140 or \$150 a dose, I'll give it."

Otherwise, Lessin said he gives patients a prescription for Gardasil that they have filled at a pharmacy and bring back to his office to be administered. Other pediatricians also are using prescriptions to supply Gardasil, a system that can mean the patient gets no insurance coverage at all for the vaccine, the Post said.

The vaccine's availability was limited even in places like Washington,

where it will soon be required for girls to attend school, the Post reported.

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