

Letters to the Editor

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This series is coordinated by Kenny Lin, MD, MPH, Associate Deputy Editor for *AFP* Online.

Lidocaine for Pain Control During IUD Placement

Original article: Intrauterine Devices: An Update

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TO THE EDITOR: We were pleased to see Harde-
man and Weiss' recent update on intrauterine
devices (IUDs).¹ They addressed many com-
mon misconceptions about IUDs, including
use in adolescents, in patients who are nul-
liparous, and in patients with a history of
sexually transmitted infection. The authors
did not mention use of lidocaine during IUD
insertion, either topically or via cervical block.
Cervical lidocaine has been used for pain con-
trol for multiple outpatient gynecologic pro-
cedures, including colposcopy, endometrial
biopsy, hysteroscopy, and cervical dilation
and aspiration.² Although the available evi-
dence is somewhat mixed, the risk of harm is
low, with a primary risk of pain, bleeding, and
vasovagal symptoms with injected lidocaine.³

Multiple trials have evaluated the use of
topical lidocaine in a gel or spray formula-
tion to decrease pain from the injection and
from the procedure itself. These formula-
tions may be less readily available and seem
to have less effect on decreasing pain.⁴

Lidocaine can be injected into the anterior
lip of the cervix to decrease pain with tenacu-
lum placement.⁵ An alternative option is to
inject lidocaine into the cervix at the 3- and
9-o'clock positions where the nerve bundles
that innervate the cervix are located.⁶ For
other outpatient gynecologic procedures,
multiple other sites of the cervix have been
injected for anesthesia, including the 4- and
8-o'clock positions or the 2-, 4-, 8-, and
10-o'clock positions.²

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IN REPLY: We would like to thank Drs. Pippitt
and Gunning for their comments regard-
ing our article. Because a prior article in
American Family Physician had thoroughly
reviewed IUD insertion techniques,¹ this was
not the primary focus of our article. How-
ever, we appreciate the information they
have shared about methods for decreasing
pain from IUD placement.

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