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Democratic vice presidential candidate Thomas Eagleton withdrew following disclosures he had once undergone psychiatric treatment.

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School vaccines grow, as does cost

By Mike Stobbe
Associated Press

ATLANTA — The growing list of childhood vaccinations reads like alphabet soup: Hib, HepA, HepB, IPV, PCV, MCV4, DTaP, Tdap, varicella and influenza.

Parents dragging their children to the doctor's office for required school shots can expect to hear about more vaccines and, if they're uninsured, new expenses.

Twenty years ago, it cost \$75 to \$100 to immunize a child with the four available vaccines. Today 12 are generally recommended, at a private-sector cost of about \$1,250.

And the government is expected to recommend a 13th vaccine for girls — a shot that protects against cervical cancer. It costs about \$360 for the three-dose series.

"The good news is we can now prevent so many diseases. The bad news is it's gotten more complicated," said Dr. Anne Schuchat, who heads immunization programs for the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Although vaccinations are routinely covered by health insurance, some worry that government funding for shots for the poor and uninsured will not keep up with demand.

Another challenge: Outbreaks of

mumps, whooping cough and other vaccine-preventable infections have shown that some immunized people can still catch the disease. So more booster shots are needed.

Doctors have been giving childhood whooping cough vaccinations for decades. So some were surprised by reports of vaccinated children coming down with the illness.

"We've learned the whooping cough vaccine we thought was going to last forever wears off by the time they reach adolescence," said Dr. Carol Baker, a Houston-based pediatrician on the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, which helps set vaccination guidelines.