

# Quarter of kids don't meet vaccine schedule

By Will Dunham *Reuters* April 29, 2008

More than a quarter of American children are not meeting the U.S. government's recommendations for childhood vaccinations, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention researchers said on Tuesday.

Their report went beyond the government's typical evaluation of whether children are getting the recommended number of doses of various vaccines and examined whether they were getting them at the right time.

Looking at children between 18 months and their 3rd birthday, the CDC researchers found that 28 percent did not meet vaccination recommendations. The results were based on a 2005 government survey involving 17,563 U.S. children in that age group.

Missed doses accounted for about two-thirds of those not in compliance. The rest got them at the wrong age or too soon after a previous dose to be considered completely effective.

Using the usual method of examining only whether children got the right number of doses, 81 percent of the children met government recommendations, the CDC said.

"We didn't look specifically at the implications on potential disease outbreaks. But we do know that doses that are given too early or too close together are not as effective as doses that are given the proper spacing and the proper age," said Elizabeth Luman of the CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases.

Luman, who led the study published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, said the United States has one of the best childhood vaccination records in the world, with fewer than 1 percent of parents not having their children vaccinated at all.

"For the vast majority of parents, they're bringing their children to get vaccinated. The schedule is very complex and it requires a lot of visits to vaccination providers at specific times. And for parents who are busy, that can be really logistically difficult," Luman said in a telephone interview.

The CDC recommends a number of vaccines to protect children against diseases like measles, polio, mumps, chicken pox and several others. Some require multiple doses.