

About 1 out of every 33 babies is born with a major birth defect.

Birth defects cause one in five deaths among infants less than a year old.

Birth defects lead to \$2.5 billion per year in hospital costs alone in the U.S.

Selected birth defects counts and birth prevalence, Colorado and US

Defects	Colorado [†]		US [‡]	
	Annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*	Annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*
Central nervous system				
Anencephalus	9	1.32	1,009	2.51
Spina bifida without anencephalus	23	3.42	1,477	3.68
Cardiovascular				
Transposition of great arteries	27	3.95	1,901	4.73
Tetralogy of Fallot	25	3.62	1,574	3.92
Atrioventricular septal defect (also known as endocardial cushion defect)	29	4.30	1,748	4.36
Hypoplastic left heart syndrome	23	3.36	975	2.43
Orofacial				
Cleft lip with and without cleft palate	83	12.10	4,209	10.47
Cleft palate without cleft lip	65	9.44	2,567	6.39
Musculoskeletal				
Upper limb defect	26	3.80	1,521	3.79
Lower limb defect	13	1.96	763	1.90
Gastroschisis	30	4.36	1,497	3.73
Chromosomal				
Down syndrome	139	20.34	5,132	12.78

* per 10,000 live births

† estimates based on pooled data from birth years 2001-2005

‡ estimates based on pooled data from birth years 1999-2001

Note: Due to variability in the methods used by state birth defects surveillance systems and differences in populations and risk factors, state prevalence estimates may not be directly comparable with national estimates or those of other states.

Preventing birth defects

- The causes of about 70% of birth defects are unknown.
- Many birth defects happen during early pregnancy, often before a woman knows she is pregnant.
- Addressing health risks and behaviors before pregnancy can reduce the risk of poor birth outcomes, including some birth defects.
- All women who could become pregnant should take 400 micrograms of folic acid every day to help prevent serious defects of the baby's brain and spinal cord.

Colorado's Birth Defect Surveillance System

Case ascertainment: combination of active and passive case ascertainment

Vital records: birth certificates, death certificates, and fetal death certificates

Other state based registries: newborn hearing screening program, newborn metabolic screening program

Delivery hospitals: disease index or discharge index, postmortem/pathology logs, specialty outpatient clinics, selected postmortem pathology sites

Pediatric & tertiary care hospitals: disease index or discharge index, postmortem/pathology logs, specialty outpatient clinics, selected postmortem pathology sites

Other specialty facilities: cytogenetic laboratories, genetic counseling /clinical genetics facilities

Other sources: physician reports, selected sites for fetal alcohol syndrome and muscular dystrophy.

How birth defects data are used in Colorado

Routine statistical monitoring, public health program evaluation, baseline rates, rates by demographic and other variables, monitoring outbreaks and cluster investigation, time trends, capture-recapture analysis, observed vs. expected analysis, epidemiologic studies.

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