

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, Kentucky and US

Defects	Kentucky [†]		US [‡]	
	Annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*	Annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*
Central nervous system				
Anencephalus	12	2.15	1,009	2.51
Spina bifida without anencephalus	23	4.12	1,477	3.68
Cardiovascular				
Transposition of great arteries	19	3.40	1,901	4.73
Tetralogy of Fallot	23	4.03	1,574	3.92
Atrioventricular septal defect (also known as endocardial cushion defect)	22	3.94	1,748	4.36
Hypoplastic left heart syndrome	13	2.24	975	2.43
Orofacial				
Cleft lip with and without cleft palate	9	1.61	4,209	10.47
Cleft palate without cleft lip	24	4.20	2,567	6.39
Musculoskeletal				
Upper limb defect	16	2.77	1,521	3.79
Lower limb defect	8	1.52	763	1.90
Gastroschisis	12	2.15	1,497	3.73
Chromosomal				
Down syndrome	77	13.78	5,132	12.78

* per 10,000 live births

† estimates based on pooled data from birth years 2004-2005

‡ 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.

Kentucky's Birth Defect Surveillance System

For over 10 years, the Kentucky Birth Surveillance Registry (KBSR) has monitored the prevalence of birth defects statewide. KBSR has served as a model for other states as both passive and active surveillance are performed in order to obtain accurate data as well as linking hospital discharge with vital records. KBSR was developed as a collaborative effort with the March of Dimes, the Kentucky Hospital Association, the KBSR Advisory Committee, and various advocacy organizations. KBSR collects information on inpatients from acute care hospitals and birthing centers as required by law. Medical laboratories licensed in KY are also required to report data.

How birth defects data are used in Kentucky

KBSR has information on approximately 90,000 children born with birth defects since 1998. KBSR has submitted data for studies by the World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Birth Defects Prevention Network and local agencies such as the Down Syndrome Association for evaluating service needs across the state.

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