

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, Vermont and US

Defects	Vermont		US [‡]	
	Annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*	Annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*
Central nervous system				
Anencephalus	--	--	1,009	2.51
Spina bifida without anencephalus	--	--	1,477	3.68
Cardiovascular				
Transposition of great arteries	--	--	1,901	4.73
Tetralogy of Fallot	--	--	1,574	3.92
Atrioventricular septal defect (also known as endocardial cushion defect)	--	--	1,748	4.36
Hypoplastic left heart syndrome	--	--	975	2.43
Orofacial				
Cleft lip with and without cleft palate	--	--	4,209	10.47
Cleft palate without cleft lip	--	--	2,567	6.39
Musculoskeletal				
Upper limb defect	--	--	1,521	3.79
Lower limb defect	--	--	763	1.90
Gastroschisis	--	--	1,497	3.73
Chromosomal				
Down syndrome	--	--	5,132	12.78

* per 10,000 live births

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

-- No data available

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.

Vermont's Birth Defect Surveillance System

Vermont's Birth Information Network began data collection with 2006 births. In early 2010 information based on three years of data will be pooled to provide Vermont-specific prevalence rates.

How birth defects data are used in Vermont

The Vermont Birth Information Network provides referrals to families of infants with birth defects. The data will also be used to provide accurate counts of children with birth defects to ensure that adequate services are available; to find ways to prevent or reduce the impact of birth defects; to improve overall health services; to evaluate prevention activities; and to document possible links between environmental and chemical exposure with birth defects of Vermont's infants and children.

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