

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 \$2.6 billion per year in hospital costs alone in the U.S.

Selected birth defects counts and birth prevalence, Florida and US

Defects	Florida [†]		US [‡]	
	Average annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*	Average annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*
Central nervous system				
Anencephalus	9	0.41	1,009	2.51
Spina bifida without anencephalus	65	2.96	1,477	3.68
Cardiovascular				
Transposition of great arteries	100	4.59	1,901	4.73
Tetralogy of Fallot	118	5.37	1,574	3.92
Atrioventricular septal defect (also known as endocardial cushion defect)	93	4.25	1,748	4.36
Hypoplastic left heart syndrome	63	2.86	975	2.43
Orofacial				
Cleft lip with and without cleft palate	180	8.22	4,209	10.47
Cleft palate without cleft lip	114	5.22	2,567	6.39
Musculoskeletal				
Upper limb defect	40	1.83	1,521	3.79
Lower limb defect	29	1.32	763	1.90
Gastroschisis	84	3.82	1,497	3.73
Chromosomal				
Down syndrome	291	13.28	5,132	12.78

* per 10,000 live births

† estimates based on pooled data from birth years 2002-2006

‡ 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.

Florida’s Birth Defect Surveillance System

Since 1999, The Florida Birth Defects Registry has monitored the prevalence of birth defects in Florida. The Registry is a statewide, population-based passive surveillance program with information on more than 55,000 infants born with serious birth defects. The registry was established to identify and describe the patterns of birth defects in Florida and to respond to community concerns about possible environmental associations.

How birth defects data are used in Florida

Through multiple sources of information, the Registry monitors all births in Florida to identify risk factors, develop prevention and intervention programs, investigate causes, promote scientific research and collaboration and assist families with referral to services. Registry data on the occurrence of neural tube defects was used to obtain funding for the purchase of multi-vitamins containing folic acid for distribution to minority and underserved women.

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