

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, New Hampshire and US

Defects	New Hampshire [†]		US [‡]	
	Average annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*	Average annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*
Central nervous system				
Anencephalus	1	1.04	1,009	2.51
Spina bifida without anencephalus	0	0	1,477	3.68
Cardiovascular				
Transposition of great arteries	2	1.82	1,901	4.73
Tetralogy of Fallot	7	5.73	1,574	3.92
Atrioventricular septal defect (also known as endocardial cushion defect)	6	4.43	1,748	4.36
Hypoplastic left heart syndrome	4	2.87	975	2.43
Orofacial				
Cleft lip with and without cleft palate	11	8.34	4,209	10.47
Cleft palate without cleft lip	10	7.82	2,567	6.39
Musculoskeletal				
Upper limb defect	2	1.30	1,521	3.79
Lower limb defect	1	1.04	763	1.90
Gastroschisis	4	2.87	1,497	3.73
Chromosomal				
Down syndrome	21	16.16	5,132	12.78

* per 10,000 live births

† estimates based on pooled data from birth years 2003-2006

‡ 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.

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New Hampshire's Birth Defect Surveillance System

The NH Birth Conditions Program (NHBCP) is a public health surveillance program that has been collecting state-wide data since 2003. The mission of the program is to: monitor 45 birth conditions in New Hampshire; develop birth conditions prevention strategies; support epidemiological research into the causes and public health impact of birth conditions; improve the ability of families to have access to intervention programs and services for infants and children with birth conditions; and to educate the community, health care providers, and service agencies regarding birth conditions.

How birth defects data are used in New Hampshire

From 2003 - 2006, over 1100 birth conditions were identified in babies born in New Hampshire with an overall annual prevalence of approximate 2% of all births. Knowledge of the occurrence of birth conditions in New Hampshire will help to monitor the occurrence of these conditions, target prevention activities and educate families about the services that are available to them.

Better tracking of when and where birth conditions occur and potential links to environmental factors will provide critical information that may help prevent birth conditions in the future.