

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, Alabama (selected counties) and US

Defects	Alabama [†]		US [‡]	
	Annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*	Annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*
Central nervous system				
Anencephalus	5	2.41	1,009	2.51
Spina bifida without anencephalus	6	3.04	1,477	3.68
Cardiovascular				
Transposition of great arteries	5	2.83	1,901	4.73
Tetralogy of Fallot	7	3.67	1,574	3.92
Atrioventricular septal defect (also known as endocardial cushion defect)	11	5.56	1,748	4.36
Hypoplastic left heart syndrome	3	1.57	975	2.43
Orofacial				
Cleft lip with and without cleft palate	18	9.54	4,209	10.47
Cleft palate without cleft lip	16	8.60	2,567	6.39
Musculoskeletal				
Upper limb defect	8	4.30	1,521	3.79
Lower limb defect	4	1.89	763	1.90
Gastroschisis	4	1.89	1,497	3.73
Chromosomal				
Down syndrome	24	12.79	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.

Alabama's Birth Defect Surveillance System

The Alabama Birth Defects Surveillance and Prevention Program (ABDSPP) has conducted population based active surveillance since 1998. Currently, the surveillance area covers 22 counties (approximately 32% of the state's births). We are unique in that we are a voluntary system. The surveillance is sustained by partnerships with state public and mental health and mental retardation agencies and support from a major university.

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How birth defects data are used in Alabama

The data collected is used to produce yearly reports on the prevalence of birth defects, and to provide data to national and international birth defects projects on the causes of birth defects and their prevention. The surveillance also links families to early intervention and health care services and conducts educational programs for professionals and the community.