

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, Georgia (metropolitan Atlanta 5-county area) and US

Defects	Georgia [†] (metro-Atlanta area)		US [‡]	
	Annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*	Annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*
Central nervous system				
Anencephalus	11	2.19	1,009	2.51
Spina bifida without anencephalus	20	3.94	1,477	3.68
Cardiovascular				
Transposition of great arteries	26	5.11	1,901	4.73
Tetralogy of Fallot	22	4.25	1,574	3.92
Atrioventricular septal defect (also known as endocardial cushion defect)	23	4.57	1,748	4.36
Hypoplastic left heart syndrome	12	2.34	975	2.43
Orofacial				
Cleft lip with and without cleft palate	45	8.89	4,209	10.47
Cleft palate without cleft lip	31	6.09	2,567	6.39
Musculoskeletal				
Upper limb defect	15	3.69	1,521	3.79
Lower limb defect	6	1.22	763	1.90
Gastroschisis	15	3.18	1,497	3.73
Chromosomal				
Down syndrome	74	14.48	5,132	12.78

* per 10,000 live births

[†] estimates based on pooled data from birth years 2001-2005 in 5-county area of metropolitan Atlanta

[‡] 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.

Georgia's Birth Defect Surveillance systems

For over 40 years, the Metropolitan Atlanta Congenital Defects Program (MACDP) has monitored the prevalence of birth defects in 5 central counties in the metropolitan Atlanta area and served as a model for other state birth defect surveillance systems. The Georgia Birth Defects Reporting and Information System (GBDRIS) was recently established by the Georgia Division of Public Health to provide information on the rates and patterns of birth defects across the state.

How birth defects data are used in Georgia

MACDP has monitored over 1.1 million births and has information on over 41,000 children born with birth defects. MACDP data are used to observe unusual patterns and to detect changes in the occurrence of birth defects. These data provide the basis for research studies into the cause of birth defects and also serve to evaluate the impact of prevention programs. MACDP also partners with the GBDRIS which provides referrals to programs and health services for at-risk children.

Program information:

Janet Cragan, MD, MPH
 Metropolitan Atlanta Congenital Defects Program
 E-mail: macdp@cdc.gov
 Website: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/bd/macdp.htm>

Katherine Kahn, MPH
 Georgia Division of Public Health
 E-mail: kckahn@dhr.state.ga.us
 Website: <http://health.state.ga.us/epi/mch/birthdefects/gbdris/index.asp>