

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, Hawaii and US

Defects	Hawaii [†]		US [‡]	
	Annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*	Annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*
Central nervous system				
Anencephalus	6	3.26	1,009	2.51
Spina bifida without anencephalus	5	3.03	1,477	3.68
Cardiovascular				
Transposition of great arteries	9	4.83	1,901	4.73
Tetralogy of Fallot	6	3.37	1,574	3.92
Atrioventricular septal defect (also known as endocardial cushion defect)	3	1.80	1,748	4.36
Hypoplastic left heart syndrome	1	0.56	975	2.43
Orofacial				
Cleft lip with and without cleft palate	17	9.78	4,209	10.47
Cleft palate without cleft lip	11	6.07	2,567	6.39
Musculoskeletal				
Upper limb defect	4	2.47	1,521	3.79
Lower limb defect	2	1.35	763	1.90
Gastroschisis	8	4.49	1,497	3.73
Chromosomal				
Down syndrome	22	12.58	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.

Hawaii's Birth Defect Surveillance System

Since 1988, the Hawaii Birth Defects Program (HBDP) has been an accurate, complete, and timely source of statewide data on infants with specific birth defects and pregnancies resulting in adverse reproductive outcomes. It annually finds and collects demographic, diagnostic, and health risk information on 800 to 1,000 infants diagnosed with a birth defect. HBDP is now a program in the Hawaii State Department of Health.

How birth defects data are used in Hawaii

HBDP is established by state law to: 1) collect surveillance information on birth defects and other adverse reproductive outcomes; 2) report the incidence, trends, and causes of birth defects and other adverse reproductive outcomes; 3) report information for the development of prevention strategies to reduce the incidence of birth defects and other adverse reproductive outcomes; and 4) develop strategies to improve the access of children with birth defects to health and early intervention services. (H.R.S. §321-422).

Program information:

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