

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, Iowa and US**

Defects	Iowa <sup>†</sup>		US <sup>‡</sup>	
	Annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*	Annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*
<b>Central nervous system</b>				
Anencephalus	11	2.78	1,009	2.51
Spina bifida without anencephalus	20	5.13	1,477	3.68
<b>Cardiovascular</b>				
Transposition of great arteries	20	5.29	1,901	4.73
Tetralogy of Fallot	14	3.61	1,574	3.92
Atrioventricular septal defect (also known as endocardial cushion defect)	25	6.55	1,748	4.36
Hypoplastic left heart syndrome	9	2.41	975	2.43
<b>Orofacial</b>				
Cleft lip with and without cleft palate	48	12.46	4,209	10.47
Cleft palate without cleft lip	29	7.70	2,567	6.39
<b>Musculoskeletal</b>				
Upper limb defect	21	5.39	1,521	3.79
Lower limb defect	11	2.78	763	1.90
Gastroschisis	19	4.98	1,497	3.73
<b>Chromosomal</b>				
Down syndrome	62	16.13	5,132	12.78

\* per 10,000 live births

<sup>†</sup> estimates based on pooled data from birth years 2001-2005

<sup>‡</sup> 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.

**Iowa's Birth Defect Surveillance System**

The mission of the Iowa Registry for Congenital and Inherited Disorders is to:

- maintain statewide surveillance for collecting information on selected congenital and inherited disorders in Iowa,
- monitor annual trends in occurrence and mortality of these disorders, and
- provide data for research studies and educational activities for the prevention and treatment of these disorders.

**How birth defects data are used in Iowa**

Since 1983, the Iowa Registry for Congenital and Inherited Disorders has worked to advance the health of Iowa children by monitoring the entire state for congenital and inherited disorders. By providing data for research studies and educational programs, the Registry works for the prevention and treatment of these disorders. The Registry also provides important information to state policy makers and public health professionals.

**Program information:**

Paul A. Romitti, PhD  
Iowa Registry for Congenital and Inherited Disorders  
E-mail: [paul-romitti@uiowa.edu](mailto:paul-romitti@uiowa.edu)

Bradley D. McDowell, PhD  
Iowa Registry for Congenital and Inherited Disorders  
E-mail: [bradley-mcdowell@uiowa.edu](mailto:bradley-mcdowell@uiowa.edu)