Birth defects state profile – Maryland

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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, Maryland and US

	Maryland†		US‡	
Defects	Annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*	Annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*
Central nervous system				
Anencephalus	19	2.73	1,009	2.51
Spina bifida without anencephalus	25	3.62	1,477	3.68
Cardiovascular				
Transposition of great arteries	--	--	1,901	4.73
Tetralogy of Fallot	--	--	1,574	3.92
Atrioventricular septal defect (also known as endocardial cushion defect)	--	--	1,748	4.36
Hypoplastic left heart syndrome	--	--	975	2.43
Orofacial				
Cleft lip with and without cleft palate	34	4.84	4,209	10.47
Cleft palate without cleft lip	20	2.87	2,567	6.39
Musculoskeletal				
Upper limb defect	27	3.91	1,521	3.79
Lower limb defect	18	2.55	763	1.90
Gastroschisis	--	--	1,497	3.73
Chromosomal				
Down syndrome	94	13.52	5,132	12.78

* per 10,000 live births
† estimates based on pooled data from birth years 2001-2004
‡ 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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Maryland's Birth Defect Surveillance System

Since 1984 Maryland's Birth Defects Reporting and Information System (BDRIS) has monitored the 12 sentinel birth defects designated by the World Health Organization (WHO). During the Maryland legislative session of 2008, the mandate for surveillance of birth defects was expanded to all birth defects documented as present or suspected at delivery or live birth of an infant. BDRIS is a passive surveillance system residing in a newly developed and launched MS Access dedicated database. Birth defects data is verified through electronic matching with the Vital Statistics Administration's birth certificate and fetal death certificate records. Any additional cases are added. The BDRIS program is staffed and operated by a nurse consultant

How birth defects data are used in Maryland

BDRIS is able to populate surveys for needs assessments, access to care, and outreach through regional mapping of the distribution of selected birth defects. BDRIS has a working partnership with the Environment Public Health Tracking System (EPHT). BDRIS data is available for stakeholders towards planning, policy deliberations and resource allocation.