Birth defects state profile – New Jersey January 2009

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, New Jersey and US

	New Jersey†		US‡	
Defects	Annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*	Annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*
Central nervous system				
Anencephalus	5	0.42	1,009	2.51
Spina bifida without anencephalus	23	1.97	1,477	3.68
Cardiovascular				
Transposition of great arteries	43	3.76	1,901	4.73
Tetralogy of Fallot	46	4.02	1,574	3.92
Atrioventricular septal defect (also known as endocardial cushion defect)	30	2.58	1,748	4.36
Hypoplastic left heart syndrome	18	1.58	975	2.43
Orofacial				
Cleft lip with and without cleft palate	80	6.94	4,209	10.47
Cleft palate without cleft lip	64	5.57	2,567	6.39
Musculoskeletal				
Upper limb defect	34	2.94	1,521	3.79
Lower limb defect	20	1.71	763	1.90
Gastroschisis	24	2.09	1,497	3.73
Chromosomal				
Down syndrome	140	12.22	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.

Program information:

Leslie M. Beres-Sochka, MS Hyg, CPM
Special Child Health Services Registry
E-mail: Leslie.Beres-Sochka@doh.state.nj.us

Mary M. Knapp, MSN
Special Child Health Services Registry
E-mail: mary.knapp@doh.state.nj.us

New Jersey's Birth Defect Surveillance System

This is the oldest such program in the country. Since 1928, the New Jersey Special Child Health Services (SCHS) Registry has registered children having birth defects and other special needs conditions. State law requires the reporting of children diagnosed with congenital defects through age five to the SCHS Registry. The Registry has confidential records of all birth defects that occur in New Jersey in order to conduct thorough and complete epidemiologic surveys of birth defects and to plan for and provide services to children with birth defects and their families.

How birth defects data are used in New Jersey

New Jersey has monitored nearly 3 million births since 1985 and has information on over 200,000 children either born with birth defects or diagnosed with special needs conditions. SCHS data are used to report incidence of birth defects in New Jersey. The New Jersey SCHS Registry serves as a national model for linking registered children and their families to various services. Families are directly linked with local county-based case management units; coordination includes health, educational, financial, and social services.