

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, Tennessee and US

Defects	Tennessee [†]		US [‡]	
	Annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*	Annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*
Central nervous system				
Anencephalus	14	1.72	1,009	2.51
Spina bifida without anencephalus	32	4.09	1,477	3.68
Cardiovascular				
Transposition of great arteries	45	5.69	1,901	4.73
Tetralogy of Fallot	40	5.03	1,574	3.92
Atrioventricular septal defect (also known as endocardial cushion defect)	28	3.56	1,748	4.36
Hypoplastic left heart syndrome	25	3.11	975	2.43
Orofacial				
Cleft lip with and without cleft palate	91	11.44	4,209	10.47
Cleft palate without cleft lip	59	7.43	2,567	6.39
Musculoskeletal				
Upper limb defect	17	2.15	1,521	3.79
Lower limb defect	10	1.26	763	1.90
Gastroschisis	38	4.75	1,497	3.73
Chromosomal				
Down syndrome	102	12.91	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.

Tennessee's Birth Defect Surveillance System

The Tennessee Birth Defects Registry (TBDR) collects prevalence information for 44 birth defects by abstracting data from the Hospital Discharge Data System (HDDS), and the Birth, Death and Fetal Death Statistical Data Systems. The TBDR also abstracts individual medical records to assess the accuracy of the TBDR data system. This includes information for all of Tennessee's 95 counties dating back to 1999. The most recent year of available data is 2005. These activities are performed in accordance to state law TCA 68-5-506.

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How birth defects data are used in Tennessee

TBDR data is used to provide annual information on birth defects prevalence and trends. These data also provide the basis to identify possible associations between birth defects and environmental hazards or other causes of birth defects, and to evaluate and guide birth defect prevention initiatives. The TBDR has shared information with public interest groups such as the March of Dimes, Tennessee Perinatal Association, Tennessee Folic Acid Foundation, CDC and NBDPN.