

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 \$2.6 billion per year in hospital costs alone in the U.S.

Selected birth defects counts and birth prevalence, Louisiana and US

Defects	Louisiana		US [‡]	
	Average annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*	Average annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*
Central nervous system				
Anencephalus	--	--	1,009	2.51
Spina bifida without anencephalus	--	--	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	--	--	4,209	10.47
Cleft palate without cleft lip	--	--	2,567	6.39
Musculoskeletal				
Upper limb defect	--	--	1,521	3.79
Lower limb defect	--	--	763	1.90
Gastroschisis	--	--	1,497	3.73
Chromosomal				
Down syndrome	--	--	5,132	12.78

* per 10,000 live births

‡ 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.

Program information:

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Louisiana's Birth Defect Surveillance System

The Louisiana Birth Defects Monitoring Network (LBDMN) is a relatively new program that initiated data collection in 2005. LBDMN currently tracks birth defects in 37 parishes (covering an estimated 80% of yearly births); statewide data are not yet available. Gradual expansion to statewide coverage is planned over the next few years, subject to the availability of adequate funding.

How birth defects data are used in Louisiana

LBDMN provides information on locally available medical, educational and social services to families whose children are included in the birth defects registry. When statewide data are available, LBDMN will be able to provide rates of the conditions listed above. LBDMN data will also be used to detect changes over time and study unusual patterns in the occurrence of birth defects (i.e. "clusters"). Most importantly, statewide data can be used to identify high-risk populations and to target birth defects prevention programs to these groups as needed.