

In the United States, 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, Maryland and US

| Defects | Maryland [†] | | US [‡] | |
|---|-----------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| | Average annual no. of cases | Birth prevalence* | Average annual no. of cases | Birth prevalence* |
| Central nervous system | | | | |
| Anencephalus | 25 | 3.5 | 859 | 2.1 |
| Spina bifida without anencephalus | 24 | 3.3 | 1,460 | 3.5 |
| Cardiovascular | | | | |
| Transposition of great arteries | 10 | 1.3 | 1,252 | 3.0 |
| Tetralogy of Fallot | 10 | 1.3 | 1,657 | 4.0 |
| Atrioventricular septal defect (also known as endocardial cushion defect) | 12 | 1.7 | 1,966 | 4.7 |
| Hypoplastic left heart syndrome | 8 | 1.1 | 960 | 2.3 |
| Orofacial | | | | |
| Cleft lip with and without cleft palate | 62 | 8.5 | 4,437 | 10.6 |
| Cleft palate without cleft lip | 25 | 3.4 | 2,651 | 6.4 |
| Musculoskeletal | | | | |
| Upper limb defect | 22 | 3.0 | 1,454 | 3.5 |
| Lower limb defect | 16 | 2.1 | 701 | 1.7 |
| Gastroschisis | -- | -- | 1,871 | 4.5 |
| Chromosomal | | | | |
| Down syndrome | 85 | 11.6 | 6,037 | 14.5 |

* per 10,000 live births

† estimates based on pooled data from birth years 2004-2008

‡ estimates based on pooled data from birth years 2004-2006

-- 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 MS Access dedicated database. Birth defects data is verified through electronic record matching with the Vital Statistics Administration's birth certificate and fetal death certificates records. Birth certificates and fetal death certificates with a documented birth defect or birth defects that do not match a record in the BDRIS files are individually reviewed for inclusion in the BDRIS database.

How birth defects data are used in Maryland

BDRIS data is available to populate surveys for needs assessments, access to care, and 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 to stakeholders for planning and policy deliberations.