

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, Missouri and US

Defects	Missouri		US [‡]	
	Average annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*	Average annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*
Central nervous system				
Anencephalus	12	1.5	859	2.1
Spina bifida without anencephalus	36	4.5	1,460	3.5
Cardiovascular				
Transposition of great arteries	39	4.9	1,252	3.0
Tetralogy of Fallot	39	4.9	1,657	4.0
Atrioventricular septal defect	--	--	1,966	4.7
Hypoplastic left heart syndrome	28	3.6	960	2.3
Orofacial				
Cleft lip with and without cleft palate	90	11.4	4,437	10.6
Cleft palate without cleft lip	57	7.2	2,651	6.4
Musculoskeletal				
Upper limb defect	20	2.6	1,454	3.5
Lower limb defect	16	2.1	701	1.7
Gastroschisis	--	--	1,871	4.5
Chromosomal				
Down syndrome	120	15.1	6,037	14.5

* per 10,000 live births

[†] estimates based on data from birth years 2003-2007

[‡] 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.

Missouri’s Birth Defect Surveillance System

The Missouri birth defects registry was established in 1985 and includes births from 1980. The registry utilizes passive surveillance, linking birth defects reported on birth certificates, infant death certificates, and newborn and pediatric hospital patient abstract reports.

How birth defects data are used in Missouri

Data are used to monitor birth defect rates throughout the state and to detect changes in birth defect occurrence. Data are also used to support program and service planning.

Program information:

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