Birth defects state profile – North Carolina — January 2010

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, North Carolina and US

	North Carolina[†]		US[‡]	
Defects	Average annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*	Average annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*
Central nervous system				
Anencephalus	29	2.35	1,009	2.51
Spina bifida without anencephalus	49	3.99	1,477	3.68
Cardiovascular				
Transposition of great arteries	33	2.70	1,901	4.73
Tetralogy of Fallot	53	4.36	1,574	3.92
Atrioventricular septal defect (also known as endocardial cushion defect)	62	5.07	1,748	4.36
Hypoplastic left heart syndrome	32	2.64	975	2.43
Orofacial				
Cleft lip with and without cleft palate	111	9.08	4,209	10.47
Cleft palate without cleft lip	70	5.69	2,567	6.39
Musculoskeletal				
Upper limb defect	39	3.15	1,521	3.79
Lower limb defect	17	1.39	763	1.90
Gastroschisis	45	3.70	1,497	3.73
Chromosomal				
Down syndrome	160	13.07	5,132	12.78

* per 10,000 live births
[†] estimates based on pooled data from birth years 2003-2006
[‡] 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.

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North Carolina's Birth Defect Surveillance System

The N.C. Birth Defects Monitoring Program (NCBDMP) is a statewide surveillance system that tracks the occurrence of birth defects among all North Carolina infants. The NCBDMP is located in the State Center for Health Statistics in the N.C. Division of Public Health. The program monitors over 130,000 births each year among nearly 100 hospitals and medical facilities statewide. The NCBDMP works with a number of partners to improve the health status of all infants and children in North Carolina.

How birth defects data are used in North Carolina

Information collected by the NCBDMP is used in many ways, including: monitoring geographic patterns and trends over time, evaluating the effectiveness of services and interventions, improving access to services for affected families, providing statistical data to various audiences, and engaging in research aimed at understanding the causes of birth defects and identifying potential new opportunities for prevention.