

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, Ohio and US

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

* per 10,000 live births

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

-- No data available

Ohio initiated statewide reporting of birth defects data in 2007. Birth defects data are not currently available for public use at this time.

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.

Ohio’s Birth Defect Surveillance System

Ohio initiated statewide reporting of birth defects to the Ohio Connections for Children with Special Health Care Needs (OCCSN) system in 2007. Over 165 hospitals report children from birth to 5 years of age per state legislation. The goals of the system are to develop a comprehensive system that includes collecting data on children with birth defects; ensuring that children with birth defects are referred to public health programs to improve their health outcomes; and educating the public and health professionals about birth defects.

How birth defects data are used in Ohio

OCCSN will utilize birth defects data to determine the burden of birth defects in Ohio and provide data to further research for birth defects causes and prevention. Ohio is currently pilot testing a referral mechanism whereby children reported to OCCSN will be cross-checked with Ohio’s Part C early intervention and CSHCN data systems. If the child is not known to these programs, a referral is made. A training curriculum for early intervention staff and public health nurses was established and continues to be presented regularly with positive feedback.

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