

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, Rhode Island and US

Defects	Rhode Island [†]		US [‡]	
	Annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*	Annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*
Central nervous system				
Anencephalus	0	0.0	859	2.1
Spina bifida without anencephalus	2	2.0	1,460	3.5
Cardiovascular				
Transposition of great arteries	3	2.8	1,252	3.0
Tetralogy of Fallot	5	3.9	1,657	4.0
Atrioventricular septal defect (also known as endocardial cushion defect)	2	1.4	1,966	4.7
Hypoplastic left heart syndrome	1	0.6	960	2.3
Orofacial				
Cleft lip with and without cleft palate	9	7.6	4,437	10.6
Cleft palate without cleft lip	8	6.5	2,651	6.4
Musculoskeletal				
Upper limb defect	2	1.4	1,454	3.5
Lower limb defect	1	1.1	701	1.7
Gastroschisis	7	5.6	1,871	4.5
Chromosomal				
Down syndrome	9	7.6	6,037	14.5

* per 10,000 live births

† estimates based on pooled data from birth years 2006-2008

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

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.

Rhode Island’s Birth Defects Surveillance System

The Rhode Island Birth Defects Program (RIBDP) describes the occurrence of birth defects in children up to age five; detects trends of morbidity and mortality; and helps assure children with birth defects receive services and treatment on a timely basis. Housed within the Rhode Island Department of Health’s Center for Health Data and Analysis, the RIBDP collects data and service information from multiple sources including hospital discharge data, specialty clinics, primary care providers, laboratories and families of children with birth defects.

Program information:

Samara Viner-Brown, MS
 Rhode Island Birth Defects Program
 E-mail: Samara.Viner-Brown@health.ri.gov

William Arias, MPH
 Rhode Island Birth Defects Program
 E-mail: william.arias@health.ri.gov

Website: <http://www.health.ri.gov/programs/birthdefects/>

How birth defects data are used in Rhode Island

Data collected by the RIBDP are utilized to determine the prevalence of birth defects and to identify trends related to specific conditions, maternal and/or child demographics, and other factors. Case ascertainment data are linked to Rhode Island’s integrated child health information system, KIDSNET, to identify whether children have received preventive and other appropriate services. The RIBDP works closely with healthcare providers and parent consultants to determine whether families of children with birth defects receive appropriate services and program referrals.