

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, South Carolina and US

Defects	South Carolina [†]		US [‡]	
	Annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*	Annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*
Central nervous system				
Anencephalus	17	2.73	1,009	2.51
Spina bifida without anencephalus	19	3.06	1,477	3.68
Cardiovascular				
Transposition of great arteries	--	--	1,901	4.73
Tetralogy of Fallot	--	--	1,574	3.92
Atrioventricular septal defect (also known as endocardial cushion defect)	--	--	1,748	4.36
Hypoplastic left heart syndrome	--	--	975	2.43
Orofacial				
Cleft lip with and without cleft palate	--	--	4,209	10.47
Cleft palate without cleft lip	--	--	2,567	6.39
Musculoskeletal				
Upper limb defect	--	--	1,521	3.79
Lower limb defect	--	--	763	1.90
Gastroschisis	--	--	1,497	3.73
Chromosomal				
Down syndrome	--	--	5,132	12.78

* per 10,000 live births

† estimates based on data from birth year 2006

‡ estimates based on pooled data from birth years 1999-2001

-- No data available

* Data reported is from Greenwood Genetic Center, prior to SC Birth Defects Program start-up in 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.

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South Carolina's Birth Defect Surveillance System

The SC Birth Defects Program began in July 2006 after passage of the SC Birth Defects Act which mandated active surveillance of major structural birth defects identified prenatally through age two. Birth defects monitoring was transitioned from Greenwood Genetic Center to SC Department of Health & Environmental Control. In the first 1 ½ years central nervous system, cardiovascular, musculoskeletal and orofacial defects were monitored. In January 2008 all birth defects recommended by the CDC/NBDPN were added for surveillance. Nurse Abstractors collect comprehensive data on mother and infant from inpatient facilities statewide. Data is collected in a web-based electronic data system that is integrated with the state's vital record system. The program is guided by the SC Birth Defects Advisory Council.

How birth defects data are used in South Carolina

To determine rates and trends of birth defects; to promote effective referral of infants/families for appropriate services; to develop public health strategies for prevention of birth defects; to conduct research on the causes, distribution and prevention of birth defects.