

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, Texas and US**

Defects	Texas <sup>†</sup>		US <sup>‡</sup>	
	Average annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*	Average annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*
<b>Central nervous system</b>				
Anencephalus	93	2.4	859	2.1
Spina bifida without anencephalus	149	3.8	1,460	3.5
<b>Cardiovascular</b>				
Transposition of great arteries	138	3.5	1,252	3.0
Tetralogy of Fallot	150	3.8	1,657	4.0
Atrioventricular septal defect (also known as endocardial cushion defect)	169	4.3	1,966	4.7
Hypoplastic left heart syndrome	83	2.1	960	2.3
<b>Orofacial</b>				
Cleft lip with and without cleft palate	441	11.1	4,437	10.6
Cleft palate without cleft lip	238	6.0	2,651	6.4
<b>Musculoskeletal</b>				
Reduction deformity, upper limbs	161	4.1	1,454	3.5
Reduction deformity, lower limbs	78	2.0	701	1.7
Gastroschisis	217	5.5	1,871	4.5
<b>Chromosomal</b>				
Down syndrome	529	13.4	6,037	14.5

\* per 10,000 live births

<sup>†</sup> estimates based on pooled data from birth years 2004-2008

<sup>‡</sup> 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 prevent serious defects of the baby’s brain and spinal cord.

**Texas’s Birth Defects Surveillance System**

The Texas Birth Defects Registry was established in 1994 as the result of an unusual cluster of anencephaly in Brownsville. Since then, Texas has maintained an active, population-based surveillance system, which became statewide in 1999. An active surveillance approach, where staff routinely visit all hospitals to identify cases of birth defects, is considered the gold standard. More than 17,000 Texas babies are born each year with one or more major structural malformations. Birth defects are the second leading cause of infant deaths and the fourth leading cause of death among 1-14 year-olds in Texas.

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**How birth defects data are used in Texas**

The Texas Birth Defects Registry monitors all births in Texas (> 400,000 each year) to identify and describe the patterns of birth defects in Texas. The Registry collaborates with researchers in finding causes of birth defects and ultimately working towards prevention. Children identified through the Registry are referred to appropriate services.