

In the United States, about 1 out of every 33 babies is born with a major birth defect.

Birth defects cause one in four 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, Utah and US

Defects	Utah [†]		US [‡]	
	Average annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*	Average annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*
Central nervous system				
Anencephalus	13	2.5	859	2.1
Spina bifida without anencephalus	25	4.7	1,460	3.5
Cardiovascular				
Transposition of great arteries	25	4.6	1,252	3.0
Tetralogy of Fallot	21	3.9	1,657	4.0
Atrioventricular septal defect (also known as endocardial cushion defect)	31	5.9	1,966	4.7
Hypoplastic left heart syndrome	19	3.5	960	2.3
Orofacial				
Cleft lip with and without cleft palate	67	12.6	4,437	10.6
Cleft palate without cleft lip	38	7.1	2,651	6.4
Musculoskeletal				
Upper limb defect	30	5.6	1,454	3.5
Lower limb defect	10	1.8	701	1.7
Gastroschisis	29	5.5	1,871	4.5
Chromosomal				
Down syndrome	77	14.4	6,037	14.5

* per 10,000 live births

† estimates based on pooled data from birth years 2004-2008

‡ 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 a multivitamin that contains 400 micrograms of folic acid every day to help prevent serious defects of the baby’s brain and spinal cord.

Utah’s Birth Defect Surveillance System

The Utah Birth Defect Network (UBDN) is a state wide population based birth defect surveillance system. The UBDN began by monitoring neural tube defects in 1994. Select defects were added each year until all major structural malformations were being tracked in 1999. Multiple sources of ascertainment are maintained to insure accuracy and completeness of data.

How birth defects data are used in Utah

The UBDN has monitored over 650,000 births. Data has been collected on over 11,000 children born in Utah with major structural birth defects. These data are used to: detect and respond to reported birth defect clusters in Utah; identify potential risk factors; plan, establish and evaluate primary prevention activities; and to identify potential participants for specific birth defect studies. The UBDN also provides information to concerned parents and their healthcare providers regarding their child’s birth defect.

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