

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, West Virginia and US

Defects	West Virginia [†]		US [‡]	
	Average annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*	Average annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*
Central nervous system				
Anencephalus	2	1.08	1,009	2.51
Spina bifida without anencephalus	7	3.56	1,477	3.68
Cardiovascular				
Transposition of great arteries	6	3.12	1,901	4.73
Tetralogy of Fallot	6	3.02	1,574	3.92
Atrioventricular septal defect (also known as endocardial cushion defect)	4	2.26	1,748	4.36
Hypoplastic left heart syndrome	3	1.51	975	2.43
Orofacial				
Cleft lip with and without cleft palate	5	2.59	4,209	10.47
Cleft palate without cleft lip	8	4.52	2,567	6.39
Musculoskeletal				
Upper limb defect	1	0.65	1,521	3.79
Lower limb defect	1	0.43	763	1.90
Gastroschisis	--	--	1,497	3.73
Chromosomal				
Down syndrome	17	8.94	5,132	12.78

* per 10,000 live births

[†] estimates based on pooled data from birth years 2002-2006

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

-- No data available

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.

Program information:

West Virginia Birth Defects Surveillance System Congenital Abnormalities Registry, Education and Surveillance System

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West Virginia’s Birth Defect Surveillance System

West Virginia birth defects system is a passive system housed within the Office of Maternal, Child and Family Health of the Bureau for Public Health in the Department of Health and Human Resources. The system collects birth defects data from all birthing facilities across the state and monitors the prevalence.

How birth defects data are used in West Virginia

West Virginia birth defects data are used to detect trends and patterns in the occurrence of birth defects in the state. These data are used for research, evaluation and prevention activities. WV CARESS also partners with Children Special Health Care Needs Systems Point of Entry, also housed in the Office of Maternal, Child and Family Health, to ensure parents of infants identified with birth defects are aware of services available to them and their families.