Birth defects state profile – Arkansas — January 2010

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, Arkansas and US

	Arkansas[†]		US[‡]	
Defects	Average annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*	Average annual no. of cases	Birth prevalence*
Central nervous system				
Anencephalus	12	3.16	1,009	2.51
Spina bifida without anencephalus	15	4.01	1,477	3.68
Cardiovascular				
Transposition of great arteries	22	5.70	1,901	4.73
Tetralogy of Fallot	12	3.22	1,574	3.92
Atrioventricular septal defect (also known as endocardial cushion defect)	10	2.74	1,748	4.36
Hypoplastic left heart syndrome	10	2.64	975	2.43
Orofacial				
Cleft lip with and without cleft palate	47	12.39	4,209	10.47
Cleft palate without cleft lip	24	6.33	2,567	6.39
Musculoskeletal				
Upper limb defect	14	3.69	1,521	3.79
Lower limb defect	9	2.43	763	1.90
Gastroschisis	21	5.64	1,497	3.73
Chromosomal				
Down syndrome	46	11.92	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
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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Arkansas's Birth Defect Surveillance System

Since 1980, the Arkansas Reproductive Health Monitoring System (ARHMS) has monitored the occurrence of birth defects within the state. Using state-wide, active surveillance methods, ARHMS gathers information on more than 200 adverse birth conditions affecting Arkansas residents. Rates of these conditions are computed for the state and closely monitored by public health professionals. ARHMS responds to community and individual requests regarding information on birth defects. ARHMS serves as a lead agency on birth defect prevention activities, including folic acid education among the healthcare provider and childbearing populations.

How birth defects data are used in Arkansas

Data derived from ARHMS allow researchers to identify trends and patterns in the prevalence of birth defects in the state. These ARHMS data provide the basis of the research studies investigating the causes of birth defects. ARHMS data also serve as a tool to evaluate the impact of prevention programs.