

Birth Defects Tracking: New Hampshire

New Hampshire Birth Conditions Program

The New Hampshire Birth Conditions Program (NHBCP) is essential for understanding the impact of birth defects in the state. The program works to identify babies with birth defects, collect data to learn about the conditions, and connect families of babies with birth defects to services in New Hampshire.



About the Program

The NHBCP is a birth defects registry that looks for birth defects among all babies who live in New Hampshire, which is important to get for a complete picture of what is happening within the state. One of 14 birth defects tracking programs that receive a grant funded by CDC's National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, NHBCP monitors about 12,000 births each year.

NHBCP creates and maintains a community of partners that value the tracking of birth defects, use information to improve the care of affected citizens and families, and pro-actively works to prevent birth defects. The program is a collaborative effort between the Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth and the State of New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services.

The NHBCP works to:

- Track 46 birth defects in New Hampshire
- Partner with other groups on prevention programs for birth defects
- Support research into the causes and public health impact of birth defects
- Help families stay informed about intervention programs and services for infants and children who have birth defects
- Educate the community, healthcare providers, and service agencies about birth defects

Common. Costly. Critical.

- Of the 12,000 babies born in New Hampshire each year, about 350 (3%) are affected by one or more major birth defects.
- Birth defects are costly – hospital costs for the treatment of birth defects are more than \$2.5 billion each year in the United States. New Hampshire Medicaid pays an average of \$7.5 million per year in medical services for children born with the birth defects tracked by the NHBCP.
- Babies born with a birth defect are more likely to die before their first birthday, compared to babies born without a birth defect.



1 in 34
babies born in
New Hampshire
has a major
birth defect



Risk Factors in New Hampshire

Although we don't know what causes most birth defects, we do know some factors (listed below) that might increase the risk for babies to be born with these conditions.

How do New Hampshire women fare?

- **Obesity:** 22% of New Hampshire women of childbearing age are obese.
- **Diabetes:** 2% of New Hampshire women of childbearing age have diabetes.
- **Alcohol use:** 5% of women in New Hampshire report heavy alcohol use during pregnancy.
- **Cigarette smoking:** 24% of New Hampshire women currently smoke, which increases the risk for cleft lip/palate and heart defects.
- **Not taking folic acid:** 60% of women in New Hampshire report not taking folic acid, a B vitamin known to help prevent birth defects of a baby's brain and spine.



Managing health conditions and adopting healthy behaviors before becoming pregnant can increase the chances for a healthy pregnancy. The NHBCP is working to educate women about getting healthy before pregnancy, with the ultimate goal of improving birth outcomes.

Program in Action



- **Supports families:** Through the work of the NHBCP, **all** families receive a packet of information about available resources for families with a child who has a birth condition.
- **Prevents birth defects:** Over the past five years, the NHBCP has worked to ensure that over 5,000 New Hampshire women who participate in the WIC Program have received free multivitamins containing folic acid and education about the importance of preconception health. Folic acid is a B vitamin that helps prevent major birth defects of the brain and spine.
- **Contributes to research:** The NHBCP assists researchers in offering study opportunities to families who have an interest in participation. Researchers are actively evaluating the possible link between environmental toxins like arsenic and the presence of birth defects.
- **Collaborates with regional partners:** The NHBCP actively participates with regional organizations such as the New England Birth Defects Consortium and the New England Genetics Collaborative to continuously work towards the prevention and early identification of babies with birth conditions. Early identification has proven to be an effective means of improving development for babies born with birth defects.

For more information, please visit:

New Hampshire Birth Conditions Program (NHBCP)
 (603) 653-3163 * www.nhbc.org