

National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities

Our Mission

The National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities (NCBDDD) promotes the health of babies, children, and adults, and enhances the potential for full, productive living through three overarching goals:

- Identifying the causes of birth defects and developmental disabilities;
- Helping children to develop and reach their full potential; and
- Promoting health and well-being among people of all ages with disabilities and blood disorders.

We seek to accomplish these goals through research, partnerships, and prevention and education programs.

Activity Snapshot

- Currently, about 120,000 babies are born with a birth defect each year. More than 5,000 of these babies die in their first year of life – making birth defects the leading cause of infant death in the United States. NCBDDD is carrying out the largest case-control study ever conducted to understand why birth defects occur. The causes of about 70% of birth defects are unknown, but with this important data researchers will be able to study possible causes of both common and rare birth defects. Once their causes are identified, the work to prevent them can begin.
- About 13% of U.S. children younger than 18 years of age have a developmental disability, such as cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, an autism spectrum disorder (ASD), intellectual disability, or a vision problem. An example of our work on developmental disabilities is NCBDDD's efforts to understand the frequency and causes of ASDs. We are monitoring the frequency of ASDs in states across the country through the Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network, and are examining the potential causes of ASDs through the Centers for Autism and Developmental Disabilities Research and Epidemiology. CDC also raises awareness of the early signs of ASDs to promote early screening and intervention to help children reach their full potential.
- Approximately 54 million in the United States have a disability, representing 1 in 5 of all Americans. Anyone – children, women and men of all ages, races and ethnicities – can experience disability at any time through illness or injury, or at birth, and generally have poorer health than people without disabilities. NCBDDD is working to prevent disease and secondary conditions that affect people with disabilities by improving disability-specific data for decision-making at national and state levels; improving access to timely health care; promoting health behaviors by including people with disabilities in mainstream public health programs; and ensuring that emergency disaster plans and response include people with disabilities.
- NCBDDD is working to save lives, reduce health costs and protect the health of people with disabilities, or at risk for disabilities. Using its leadership and expertise on this target population, NCBDDD collaborates on surveillance, research, public health programs, policy and partnerships.





- Blood disorders, such as sickle cell disease, hemophilia, and venous thromboembolism, are complex conditions that can lead to chronic health problems and even death. These disorders affect millions of people each year in the United States, cutting across the boundaries of age, race, sex, and socioeconomic status. Men, women, and children of all backgrounds live with the complications associated with these conditions, many of which are painful and potentially life-threatening. NCBDDD is identifying risk factors that can lead people to be at higher risk for health complications associated with having blood disorders. We also work to enhance the safety of blood products that are used to treat blood disorders and raise awareness of blood disorders among the public and health professionals. Additionally, CDC conducts laboratory studies to evaluate, improve, and standardize methods and procedures for classifying blood disorders, and works with partners to increase the effectiveness of treatments, reduce complications, and protect children and adults who have blood disorders.

NCBDDD's Divisions

In order for NCBDDD to carry out its mission, NCBDDD has three program-specific divisions to support and implement program areas.

Division of Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities

The Division of Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities works to identify causes of birth defects and developmental disabilities. Under the Birth Defects Prevention Act of 1998, which became Public Law 105-168, the division is authorized to (1) collect, analyze, and make available data on birth defects; (2) operate regional centers for applied epidemiologic research on the prevention of birth defects; and (3) inform and educate the public about the prevention of birth defects.

Division of Human Development and Disability

The Division of Human Development and Disability leads public health in preventing disease and promoting health, development and full participation across the lifecourse of children, youth and adults with, and at risk for disabilities.

Division of Blood Disorders

The Division of Blood Disorders is working toward developing a comprehensive public health agenda to prevent complications and improve the health of people with blood disorders. As a key component of this public health approach, CDC staff is dedicated to identifying, monitoring, diagnosing, and investigating blood disorders so that we can understand the prevalence, attributes, and effects of these disorders to develop effective interventions. With proper preventive actions and early intervention, the complications of many blood disorders could be prevented.

NCBDDD Atlanta:

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