

Birth Defect Series: Anencephaly



What: Anencephaly is a birth defect in which a baby is born with part of the brain and skull missing. Almost all babies with anencephaly die shortly after birth.

Why: Anencephaly is a neural tube defect. These birth defects occur very early in pregnancy. The neural tube develops into the brain and spinal cord during the fourth week of pregnancy. Anencephaly occurs if the top of the neural tube does not close properly. A lack of folic acid during pregnancy is linked to birth defects involving the neural tube.

When: Anencephaly is usually detected during pregnancy with the help of ultrasound machines. Screening tests during pregnancy may also show abnormal results.

How: There is no known treatment for anencephaly. Supportive care is typically offered as most babies will die shortly after birth.

Resources for Illinois Families

...

Adverse Pregnancy Outcomes Reporting System

[http://www.dph.illinois.gov/
data-statistics/epidemiology/
apors](http://www.dph.illinois.gov/data-statistics/epidemiology/apors)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/
birthdefects/
anencephaly.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefects/anencephaly.html)

March of Dimes

[http://
www.marchofdimes.org/
baby/neural-tube-
defects.aspx](http://www.marchofdimes.org/baby/neural-tube-defects.aspx)

**And visit your
doctor for more
information.**

Image courtesy of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,
National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities.

