

Birth defects in IVF children.

Birth defects in children occur at a low incidence in all populations. It may vary over time and by country and therefore needs to be continuously monitored.

In Europe, the Nordic countries have a unique capacity to do this through continuously updated population based health registers with identification numbers for each individual. Data on birth defects in children born after IVF can be compared in these registers to data from the total population. The data on birth defects from the Nordic countries have been supported also by comparable research in other European countries.

Based on these Nordic and European data the occurrence of birth defects in relation to infertility and IVF treatments in Europe can currently be summarized as follows:

1. All children born have a risk for a birth defect of about 3%.
2. Children from couples who get pregnant after assisted reproduction techniques (ART), like IVF/ICSI, have a 40-50% increased risk for a birth defect. A similar increased risk has been reported for subfertile couples who get pregnant spontaneously after a prolonged time period. This increased risk seems thus mainly be due to parental characteristics from the infertility status and not to the treatment given.

A recent case-control study from USA has confirmed these findings.