

Bronchopulmonary dysplasia can affect both males and females. The exact incidence of BPD is unknown. The National Institutes of Health estimates that 10,000-15,000 babies born in the United States develop BPD each year. The risk of developing BPD increases the earlier a baby is born and the lower the birth weight. Infants born weighing less than 2.2 pounds are at the greatest risk for developing BPD. The number of cases of BPD has been increasing most likely because of modern advances in medicine, which have enabled doctors to keep more low birth weight, premature babies alive than in the past. BPD was first described in the medical literature in 1967. A diagnosis of BPD is made based upon identification of characteristic symptoms, a detailed patient history, a thorough clinical evaluation and a variety of specialized tests including blood tests, chest x-rays, and echocardiograms. Blood tests may show low levels of oxygen in the blood. Chest x-rays may show distinctive changes in the lungs including abnormal development of the lungs. An echocardiogram is used to rule out other conditions that can cause breathing difficulties in infants such as congenital heart defects. During an echocardiogram, sound waves are directed toward the heart, enabling physicians to study cardiac function and motion.