

Anencephaly is the absence of a major portion of the brain, skull, and scalp that occurs during embryonic development.

It is a cephalic disorder that results from a [neural tube defect](#) that occurs when the rostral (head) end of the neural tube fails to close, usually between the 23rd and 26th day following conception.

Strictly speaking, the Greek term translates as “no in-head” (that is, totally lacking the inside part of the head, i.e. the brain), but it is accepted that children born with this disorder usually only lack a telencephalon, the largest part of the brain consisting mainly of the cerebral hemispheres, including the neocortex, which is responsible for cognition. The remaining structure is usually covered only by a thin layer of membrane— skin, bone, meninges, etc. are all lacking. With very few exceptions, infants with this disorder do not survive longer than a few hours or possibly days after their birth.

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