

Primitive Reflexes 1

Factors associated with Retained Primitive Reflexes:

- Developmental motor delay
- Premature birth
- Assisted birth delivery
- Induced labour
- Slow or fast labour
- Torticollis
- Tongue & lip tie
- Minimal floor time
- Low birth weight
- Severe traumatic event
- Autism

Children may struggle with the following if they have retained primitive reflexes:

- Coordination & balance
- Games & sport
- Handwriting
- Reading & writing
- Focusing in class
- Social skills

Primitive reflexes - What are they all about?

Primitive reflexes are present at birth as part of our central nervous system (CNS). They are built in like 'pre-packaged software'. At first sight, some reflexes make more sense than others. The Rooting reflex for instance, enables the baby to turn towards a mother's nipple to suck when the baby feels a light stroke on the cheek. The Palmer Grasp reflex makes the baby grasp and hold on to things and the Moro (startle) reflex will attract the carer's attention immediately if the baby gets frightened. These and others are essentially survival reflexes.

Are they primitive?

Only in the sense that they are automatic. When the infant grows, these reflexes are meant to become suppressed or integrated as the central nervous system becomes much more sophisticated. The infant begins to react to the surrounding environment with purpose and intention.

When and how do they disappear?

The majority of reflexes disappear or are integrated within the first 12 months of life, but some not until the age of 3. Integration is natural and very much in line with an infant's developmental milestones. Mastering head control, rolling over, reaching to grab objects, sucking, chewing, crawling etc. are all natural movements that suppress primitive



What Does it Mean if Primitive Reflexes are Retained?

Retained primitive reflexes suggest, that full central nervous system development has not occurred. This may be obvious. A child with delay in meeting developmental milestones, will almost inevitably have retained primitive reflexes. Retained primitive reflexes may also be subtle and are present in children who suffer with clumsiness or poor coordination. They typically struggle with handwriting, school sports, learning to ride a bike etc. Naturally this can affect school performance and socialisation, so identifying this early gives us the opportunity for Early Intervention.

Are Primitive Reflexes More Prevalent than in Previous Generations?

We have a much better understanding of the role that primitive reflexes play today and their impact on a child's normal development. Research suggests a higher statistical presence of retrained primitive reflexes in line with higher medical intervention at birth. Higher medical intervention can be associated with us having children later in life, utilising available technology and sometimes choice of delivery.

Ways to Integrate Primitive Reflexes.

A Chiropractor experienced in working with children, primitive reflexes and functional neurology can identify a retained primitive reflex. Retained primitive reflexes may also delay or prevent an infant from reaching a developmental milestone. An example of this, is an infant who doesn't crawl before walking or crawls while dragging one leg behind them.

Contrary to some social media posts, there is no magic fix. Successful treatment may be learning or relearning correct motor skills through specific exercises and play. This takes some time just like learning any skill, and bear in mind that some of these skills may never have existed for a particular child. It is not like us working on a tennis serve gone rusty.



Release the Full Potential

The benefit of doing work with primitive reflexes cannot be underestimated. The central nervous system develops at the fastest rate in our first few years of life. When development is compromised, the effects can be profound. They can have a significant impact on the way a child interacts with the world around them, including the family, at school and in social settings. A child may lack confidence to move and play, which we know is vital to our general physical health as well as our mental health and wellbeing.

If you suspect that your child would benefit from this, please give us a call.

We would love to help.

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