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Chiropractic Care for Retained Primitive Reflexes

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Chiropractic care is an effective way to remove factors that interfere with the body's nervous system communication. When performed for retained primitive reflexes, it integrates the reflex into the patient using low-force adjustments and at-home exercises.

How can a visit to the chiropractor help if your child has retained any of their primitive reflexes?

Primitive Reflexes in Children & Babies

Primitive reflexes, sometimes called newborn reflexes, are noticeable at birth despite many people not knowing exactly what's happening. Have you ever put your finger on a baby's palm only to have the baby wrap their fingers around your finger? That's a primitive reflex.

The purpose of primitive reflexes is survival. They happen automatically via communication between the brain and the spinal cord. Your baby is not consciously thinking, "I'll wrap my fingers around mom's finger." Instead, the response happens automatically.

There are several primitive reflexes, including:

Body Reflexes





- **Palmar Grasp:** This is the most well-known primitive reflex. It's a grasping reflex that occurs when a baby closes their fingers around an object (usually a finger) placed on their palm.
- **Plantar Reflex:** The plantar reflex (known in babies as the extensor plantar reflex) occurs when you stroke the bottom of the foot. Doing so causes the big toe to flex up and out, and the other toes then follow the motion. This is also known as the Babinski sign.
- **Galant:** This is a response to a baby being held face down and having the skin on the side of their back stroked. This causes the baby to shift toward the side that was stroked. It helps the baby develop a range of motion and, eventually, the ability to crawl and walk.
- **Startle:** This is also called the Moro reflex. It's perhaps the most crucial reflex for survival. Several things can cause a baby to startle, including noise, temperature changes, and a sudden change in the position of their head. Any of these things can cause a baby to stretch out their legs and head and jerk their arms upward and out, then bring their arms together and clench their fists. The startle reflex is sometimes followed by crying.
- **Stepping:** Babies have a natural walking instinct. Hold a baby up safely and put their feet on a table – their instinct is to begin putting one foot in front of the other.
- **ATNR** (asymmetrical tonic neck reflex): This happens when you turn a baby's head sideways. It causes their arm and leg on the side to which they're turned to straighten and the opposite side's arm and leg to bend.
- **TLR** (tonic labyrinthine reflex): Laying a baby on its back and tilting its head forward causes the arms and legs to curl in. Tilting their head backward causes the arms and legs to flail out. This is a natural response to gravity.
- **STNR** (symmetrical tonic neck reflex): Moving a baby's head forward causes the arms to bend and the legs to straighten. Moving their head backward causes straight arms and bent legs. Your baby is learning to operate their lower and upper body parts independently.

Oral & Facial Reflexes

Startle & Rooting Reflexes

- **Sucking:** Put a finger or bottle or nipple near into your baby's mouth, and they'll automatically begin sucking rhythmically. Like the startle reflex, this is one of the most important for survival because, without it, your baby cannot coordinate breathing and swallowing – they won't be able to eat.



- **Rooting:** The **rooting** reflex helps babies find their food source. They do this by turning their head toward anything that touches their cheek.

At What Age Do Primitive Reflexes Go Away?

Most primitive reflexes go away by around four to six months of age. Some evolve into other reflexes, while others stop entirely. They go away as the baby's brain function matures, replacing primitive reflexes with voluntary movement.

What Happens If Primitive Reflexes Are Retained?

Primitive reflexes are necessary for survival, but they have a time and place. If they stick around too long, they'll interfere with a baby's development.

Retained primitive reflexes can affect a variety of developmental milestones, including:

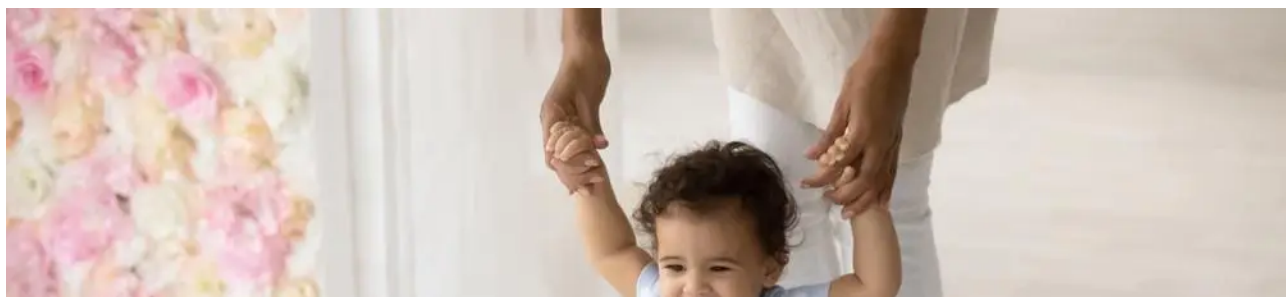
- Coordination
- Balance
- Fine motor skills
- Sensory perception
- Sleep
- Immunity
- Impulse control
- Energy levels
- Concentration
- Learning at all levels, including academic, emotional, and social

Babies with a retained reflex might exhibit the following:

- Restlessness
- Poor concentration
- Trouble with concentration
- Listening difficulties
- Underdeveloped fine and gross motor skills
- Challenges with emotional and physical balance
- Difficulty processing information

How a Chiropractor Can Help

Chiropractors focus on improving the functionality of the nervous system. The goal of adjustment is to remove interference in the nervous system. This allows the body to function at its highest capacity. Retaining primitive reflexes inhibits the development of the nervous system.





Chiropractic adjustments **and at-home exercises** can help children with:

- Picky eating
- Poor head control
- Light sensitivity
- Balance issues
- Weak grip strength
- Bedwetting
- Speech delays
- Digestive difficulties



Dr. Darren Faherty D.C.

In 2004, Dr. Darren Faherty graduated with a Bachelors of Science degree in Biology from UWEC - University of Wisconsin Eau Claire. Dr. Darren continued education at the highly esteemed University of Western States (formerly Western States Chiropractic College) where he obtained his chiropractic degree in 2007. He has been helping people recover from injuries and return to their normal lifestyles ever since.



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