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Vision Therapy for Primitive Reflexes

Dr. Russel Lazarus, March 7, 2021

Retained primitive reflexes can significantly affect a child's school achievements, confidence and self esteem.

There is a significant correlation between [retained primitive reflexes](#) and vision skill deficits in the children, ages 6-14. This was shown in a published clinical trial, by a private behavioral optometric practice near Cleveland, Ohio, to examine the relationship between Visual Skill Deficits (VSD) and retained primitive reflexes in children ages 6-14.

What are retained primitive reflexes?

To a parent, the primitive reflexes can be seen as their baby's ability to crawl, reach for and grab objects and move or tilt their head in response to sound or movement. These movements are signs of a healthy newborn.

However, as a baby's brain matures, they should lose these basic primitive reflexes and no longer display them after 5-7 months.

If you are concerned that your child has [retained primitive reflexes](#), visit your eye doctor for an eye exam.

How does vision therapy help?

A vision therapy program is a customized program of exercises aimed to improve the maturation of the baby's brain and neural pathways.

By using rhythmic movement training techniques that mimicking a developing infant's movements, children are able to integrate these retained reflexes.

Once these reflexes are integrated by the body, many [behavioral and learning](#) issues affected by retained primitive reflexes become resolved.

Since, vision is directly connected to the brain, when our brains are not properly developed it is important to address the issue. By addressing retained primitive reflexes, a vision therapy program provides the most comprehensive approach to resolving problems that arise.

[Contact an eye doctor](#) near you that can conduct eye exams that can help find a solution to your child's needs.

SEE RELATED: [What are Retained Primitive Reflexes?](#)

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Which reflexes are corrected?

Although there are many primitive reflexes, vision therapy programs focus on five reflexes that affect vision.

Moro Reflex

The earliest primitive reflex is the Moro reflex, this affects motor, ocular, vestibular, and visual perceptual skills.

Symptoms include:

- [Allergies](#)
- Biochemical and nutritional imbalances
- Difficulty with black print on white paper
- Exaggerated startle reflex
- Eye movement and visual processing problems
- Frequent infections
- Hyperactivity
- Inner ear problems
- Light sensitivity
- Low self-esteem
- Motion sickness
- Poor auditory discrimination
- Poor balance
- Poor coordination
- Poor stamina
- Tense muscle tone
- Often in “Fight or Flight” mode

Tonic Labyrinthine Reflex (TLR)

TLR affects muscle tone, balance, ocular motor, balance, and auditory discrimination.

Symptoms include:

- Dislike of sports
- Eye movement, spatial and visual perceptual problems
- Fear of heights
- Motion sickness
- Poor balance
- Poor coordination
- Poor organization skills
- Poor posture and/or stooping
- Poor sense of time
- Poor sequencing skills
- Stiff or jerky movements
- Toe walking
- Weak muscle tone

Symmetrical Tonic Neck Reflex (STNR)

STNR affects crossing midline, focusing from near to far, and fixation.

Symptoms include:

- ADD/ADHD characteristics
- Anchors feet behind chair while sitting
- Difficulties with adjusting focus from far to near
- Difficulty aligning numbers for math problems
- Difficulty catching and/or tracking a ball
- Difficulty recognizing social cues

- Difficulty swimming
- Learning problems
- Messy eater
- Poor depth perception and balance
- Poor posture
- Poor hand-eye coordination
- “W” position when sitting on the floor

Asymmetrical Tonic Neck Reflex (ATNR)

ATNR affects eye tracking, midline issues, handwriting, balance, and laterality.

Symptoms include:

- ADD/ADHD characteristics
- Difficulty catching a ball
- Difficulty crossing the midline
- Difficulty keeping place when copying
- Difficulty learning to ride a bicycle
- Focusing problems (especially when switching from near to distance)
- Mixed laterality (uses left foot, right hand or uses left or right hand interchangeably)
- Poor balance when moving head side to side
- Poor expression of ideas on paper
- Poor handwriting
- Poor pursuits (smooth eye movements)

Spinal Galant Reflex

Spinal Galant reflex affects short-term memory, the ability to sit still, concentration problems, and bedwetting.

Symptoms include:

- ADHD characteristics
- Bedwetting
- Fidgety or wiggly (especially when sitting)
- Poor concentration
- Poor short-term memory
- Sensory issues with food texture or tags or waistbands in clothing

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If you are concerned about your child's development, contact an [eye doctor near you](#) to schedule an appointment, they will provide you with information on how a vision therapy program could benefit your child.

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