

What are Primitive Reflexes

- At birth, primitive reflexes are present to assist in survival - many develop in utero. These involuntary movement patterns are designed to keep the newborn alive and help with development throughout infancy.
- They are "automatic, stereotyped movements, directed from the brain stem and executed without cortical involvement." (Goddard)
- The kicker here is that these primitive reflexes do not stay forever; they should integrate - or mature.
- Some primitive reflexes integrate before the first year, while some integrate as late as 3 years.
- When a primitive reflex integrates, it makes way for new, more mature and intentional movement patterns, and higher-level learning to develop.

How do primitive reflexes naturally integrate?

- Primitive reflexes are not meant to remain in the body forever. Once they integrate, more mature and voluntary movements appear.
- Primitive reflexes are meant to integrate naturally - through movement, or what we call "developmental milestones."
- Developing head control, tummy time, rolling, crawling, etc. - these are all examples of natural movements that will assist in natural primitive reflex integration.
- When you look closely, you can often see primitive reflexes integrate as new developmental milestones are reached!

What if primitive reflexes do not integrate?

- Each primitive reflex comes with its own set of movements and leads to new and different developmental milestones.
- If a specific reflex is retained, it may affect a specific area of development.
- Additionally, many reflexes are directly related to one another. Therefore, if one reflex is retained, we can assume that others may also be retained.
- If a primitive reflex does not integrate naturally, this is an indication of structural

weakness or immaturity within the CNS (central nervous system).

- Instead of mature, voluntary movement patterns, a child with retained primitive reflexes may develop abnormal movement patterns which can result in clumsiness. This can affect a child's ability to participate in daily activities.

When children retain Primitive Reflexes, they will often struggle with:

- **Social Skills**
- **Coordination for playing games or sports**
- **Emotional Regulation**
- **Problem Solving**
- **Focusing in Class**
- **Ants in Their Pants**
- **Reading and writing**
- **Anxiety**

How do I know if my child has Retained Primitive Reflexes?

(or maybe if I have one, or two as well?)

Here are some common behaviors of people who have Retained Primitive Reflexes:

- motion sickness
- anxiety/nervousness
- mood swings
- frequent headaches
- fatigues easily
- presents with ADD/ADHD tendencies
- poor social skills
- poor balance
- poor muscle tone
- poor posture (seated/standing)
- fear of heights
- abnormal gait
- fidgeting
- decreased concentration
- bed wetting beyond age 5
- irritated by clothing on waist
- frequent middle ear infections
- IBS over the age of 4 years
- poor handwriting
- right/left confusion
- mixes b's and d's during writing
- did not crawl/skipped crawling as a baby

- struggled with rolling in infancy
- lays head on desk while writing
- biting fingernails
- thumb sucking beyond 1.5 years old
- tightening of jaw with clenched fists
- eats with hands rather than utensils
- extreme picky eating
- messy eater
- difficulty chewing/swallowing
- tethered oral tissues
- reading difficulties
- ants-in-the-pants
- challenges calming down
- poor impulse control



Why Does Reflex Integration Matter?

Unfortunately, for some children, this integration doesn't occur spontaneously. These reflexes persist subtly manifesting and causing a myriad of challenges. Recognizing signs of non- [Home](#) [Primitive Reflex Integration](#) contribute to issues like poor impulse control, sensory overload, mood swings, hypersensitivity, and more.

Some red flags indicating non-integrated reflexes include:

- Poor impulse control
- Sensory overload
- Easily distracted
- Mood swings
- Hypersensitivity
- Poor concentration
- Frequent w-sitting
- Difficulty with hand-eye coordination
- Poor muscle tone
- Writing difficulties
- Fine motor weakness
- Sticking out the tongue during fine motor activities
- Hypersensitivity to textures on their hand
- Fidgety movements
- Bedwetting after age 5
- Poor attention and focus
- Poor posture
- Poor short-term memory

Understanding the importance of reflex integration is the first step towards unlocking

your child's full potential. Discover if reflex integration therapy is the right path for your child and embark on a journey to empower their individual mind.



OTEIM - Occupational Therapy Empowering Individual Minds

[Directions](#)



Please fill out this form to find out more about how we can help your child

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