Primitive reflexes integration for kids & adults

At Neurofit, we help adults and children to integrate retained primitive reflexes to improve quality of life.

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What are primitive reflexes?

Babies are born with primitive reflexes – reflex movements that arise from the central nervous system (CNS). These involuntary movements enhance their chances of survival.

There are many, many primitive reflexes (https://www.physio-pedia.com/Primitive_Reflexes), which health professionals can test for. But there are some you can see in your own baby, such as the:

Babinski reflex

Startle reflex

Rooting reflex

Palmer grasp reflex

These reflexes enable movements (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9301367/) that help a baby to drink milk, grasp your finger, roll over and crawl.

As a baby grows and gains more control over its body, it loses the need for primitive reflexes. By about 4-6 months of age, the brain has matured enough to replace involuntary reflexes with deliberate, voluntary motor control. This is known as 'reflex integration'.

Sometimes, though, these reflexes don't subside as a baby grows up. Retained reflexes can have an impact on brain function, which is why we look for them when we're treating patients with neurodevelopmental or neurobehavioural disorders.

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What impact can retained primitive reflexes have?

As researchers note, (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5778413/#:~:text=Retained%20primitive%20reflexes%20can%20disturb,system%20itself%2 says, **"Retained primitive reflexes can disturb natural development and involve difficulties in children's social and educational life. They can also impact on psychomotor development. Mature responses in a child's psychomotor progress can only occur if the central nervous system itself has reached maturity."**

Other researchers note (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9301367/) that retained primitive reflexes have been found to coexist in children and adults with neurobehavioural disorders such as ADHD, autism, Tourette's and dyslexia. Identifying these retained primitive reflexes opens up a possible treatment pathway – helping the brain to integrate those reflexes.

In the US, Brain Balance Centers runs a very similar program to ours at Neurofit Brain Centre. They describe signs of retained primitive reflexes (https://www.brainbalancecenters.com/blog/retained-primitive-reflexes-sign-brain-imbalance) in the chart below.

Source: Brain Balance Centers (https://www.brainbalancecenters.com/blog/retained-primitive-reflexes-sign-brain-imbalance)

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How do we integrate primitive reflexes?

The human brain is utterly amazing. It's constantly learning and changing in response to new stimuli. This is known as neuroplasticity and it's a fascinating area of medical science.

Integration isn't an end in itself – the real goal is to make daily living easier for you or your child. The therapeutic goals may be measures like easier mealtimes, improved hand-eye coordination or better concentration. That can translate to easier family life or improved educational outcomes.

Integration of primitive reflexes involves providing the right stimulation to help the brain mature. Brain-based exercises (https://www.occupationaltherapy.com/articles/understanding-primitive-reflexes-they-impact-5409-5409) may include criss-crossing movements, making star-shapes, squeezing Play-Doh or holding a 'Superman' position on the floor.

Primitive reflex integration at Neurofit Brain Centre

At Neurofit Brain Centre, we believe brain activity makes an active difference. We aim to identify areas of the brain that are underdeveloped, under-regulated or under-integrated then provide specific, targeted activities to improve function.

We also know that a therapy program has to be fun if you're going to stick with it. That's why we use a range of evidence-based therapies that are highly engaging such as brain-based video games and music. When something's fun, you're much more likely to commit to it – and that's when you start to see results.

If you or your child is experiencing difficulties in daily life that could be due to retained reflexes, then we encourage you to come and see us. We'll conduct a thorough assessment and recommend a program of treatment to support your goals.

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Registered NDIS provider

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Opening hours

Monday to Friday 9am – 6pm

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