

What's the fuss over Primitive Reflexes?



What are Primitive Reflexes?

One of the inputs for our Hatch Programmes revolve around what are called Primitive Reflexes.

But you may never have heard of these? Here's a round-up of what they are all about.

Our nervous system (brain and spinal cord) is one of the first to develop after conception and one of the last to be completed after birth.

Primitive reflexes are a set of involuntary, instinctive reactions to specific stimulus that have evolved over millennia to assist in our birth, survival in the first few vulnerable months and provide basic training for later voluntary skills.

They are some of the first parts of the nervous system to develop and should only be active for the first few months of life.

These primitive reflexes help **develop the brain** while still in the womb, forming connections that are important for

- **learning**
- **behaviour**
- **communication**
- **relationships**
- **emotional wellbeing**

These reflexes begin in the womb and in infancy and become inhibited as the movements become more practiced and controlled.



This **integration** of these reflexes into the nervous system typically occurs in sequence in the first year of life to be replaced by responses and actions that can be **consciously controlled or modified**.

We may be familiar with some of these primitive reflexes – you may have noticed them in your child.

- **Moro or Startle reflex** ~ a baby's fight or flight. Where a baby flails their arms out if they are experiencing the sensation of falling. This should be replaced by an adult startle reflex by **4 months**. Retention of this can be associated with being '**over sensitive**', **impulsive behaviour**, **sensory overload**, **social immaturity and anxiety** among other things.
- **Rooting reflex** ~ this assists in breastfeeding and is activated by stroking a baby's cheek. Again, this should be integrated by **4 months**. Retention of the rooting reflex can result in difficulty with **speech and thumb sucking**.
- **Palmer reflex** ~ where a light touch to a new-born's palm will cause the involuntary flexing of the fingers to grab your finger. This should not be found **after 6 months old**. A retained palmar reflex can create issues around fine motor skills including **handwriting**.

There are, of course, several more primitive reflexes. If the primitive reflexes fail to integrate the pathways for conscious control of these movements cannot develop properly. This can affect **normal development** of motor and processing skills and the integration of left and right sides of the brain.

The child is restricted to more immature responses to their environment.



What Causes Primitive reflexes to be Retained?

The following have, amongst other things, been associated with retaining primitive reflexes

- A traumatic birth process
- Caesarean-section birth
- Falls
- Traumas
- lack of tummy time
- delayed or missed creeping or crawling
- chronic ear infections

What's the Problem?

So, you may have recognised some of these with your own child? So, what? What are the implications? Retained primitive reflexes have been associated with developmental delay disorders such as

- **ADHD**
- **Sensory processing disorder**
- **Autism**
- **Learning disabilities**

The presence of primitive reflexes can also contribute to **problems** with:

- coordination
- balance
- fine motor skills
- sensory perception
- immunity
- sleep
- energy levels
- concentration



and therefore, can **negatively affect** your child with:

- academia,
- social skills
- emotional wellbeing

What's the Solution?

But don't panic!

When integration of primitive reflexes hasn't taken place within the appropriate time frame it is important to **revisit the appropriate developmental stages**.

Specific movements and activities will help create new neural pathways and allow the integration process to take place which in turn help the **behaviour patterns to mature**. This will help your child progress on with their development



These movement patterns and activities form an integral part of our programmes.

They will help your child break free of the shell that is holding them back.



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