

What are primitive reflexes?

Primitive reflexes are automatic movements that develop in the brain stem before birth. These involuntary movements are signaled from the brain stem and don't require involvement from other areas of the brain. The reflexes help the baby survive and develop in utero, during birth, and the first few years of life. The primitive reflexes go away by becoming integrated during the first few years of the baby's life as higher functions of the brain mature. The reflexes must be integrated for proper brain development; if not integrated, they can affect a child's function and behavior in everyday life.

How are primitive reflexes affecting my child's everyday life?

Primitive reflexes that remain after the few years of the child's life can interfere with the organization of brain development, social, academic, and motor learning. This can cause learning, behavioral, social, and sensory problems for the child. For example, the child can have poor balance, difficulty sitting, or poor eye hand coordination. Children with learning disorders, ADHD, ASD, and other disorders can have retained primitive reflexes that contribute to their symptoms.

What can cause the reflexes to be retained?

Some causes for retained reflexes may include a traumatic birth, traumatic C-section birth, insufficient tummy time, lack of or little crawling, early walking, head injuries, too much time laying in swings, and excessive falls.

What can be done to help integrate the reflexes?

The child will be assessed for primitive reflex retention through simple tests. After the retained reflexes are determined, the child will participate in exercises that can integrate the reflexes. The child will practice the exercises during therapy sessions and will be given a program to complete them at home. Along with integrating reflexes, these exercises can help the child increase muscle control, postural control, and core strength. Once the reflexes are integrated, neurological development and function in everyday life can be improved.

References

Retained Neonatal Reflexes (2016). What is a Retained Neonatal Reflex. Retrieved April 16, 2017, from <https://www.retainedneonatalreflexes.com.au/>

Solve Learning Disabilities. (2017). 8 Primitive Reflexes That Every Parent Should Know About. Retrieved April 16, 2017, from <https://www.solvelearningdisabilities.com/8-primitive-reflexes-that-every-parent-should-know-about/>

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