



## UNDERSTANDING PRIMITIVE REFLEXES

*What they are, why they matter, and how they impact your child*

As part of your child's session, we worked with *primitive reflexes*—automatic movements that develop in the womb or early infancy to help with survival, birth, and early development. These reflexes are meant to be active for a short time and then integrated (or replaced) by more mature patterns as the brain develops.

When they remain active past infancy—due to stress, trauma, illness, or developmental interruption—they can create hidden stress in the nervous system, affecting everything from posture and coordination to emotional regulation and focus.

Below is a quick guide to the reflexes we assess and support:



### **Fear Paralysis Reflex (FPR)**

- **Purpose:** First reflex in utero; helps the baby cope with stress.
- **If retained:** Can cause freeze responses, anxiety, overwhelm, or hypersensitivity.



### **Moro Reflex**

- **Purpose:** The “startle” reflex – alerts baby to danger and helps initiate breathing.
- **If retained:** Can lead to emotional reactivity, sensory overload, and sleep difficulties.



### **Startle Reflex (post-Moro)**

- **Purpose:** A protective reflex that should mature after the Moro fades.
- **If retained:** Can result in ongoing jumpiness or exaggerated fear responses.



### **Tonic Labyrinthine Reflex (TLR)**

- **Purpose:** Helps with head control, posture, and balance.
- **If retained:** Can cause poor muscle tone, motion sickness, or difficulty with spatial awareness.



### **Symmetrical Tonic Neck Reflex (STNR)**

- **Purpose:** Prepares the body for crawling; links upper and lower body movements.
- **If retained:** May affect sitting posture, handwriting, and attention span.

## **Asymmetrical Tonic Neck Reflex (ATNR)**

- **Purpose:** Helps with birthing and early hand-eye development.
- **If retained:** Can impact reading, writing, crossing the midline, and coordination.

## **Palmar Reflex**

- **Purpose:** Grasping response that helps with bonding and early touch.
- **If retained:** May affect fine motor skills and create tension in the hands and jaw.

## **Babinski Reflex**

- **Purpose:** Encourages walking patterns and sensory feedback through the feet.
- **If retained:** May affect balance, gait, and create tension in the lower body.

## **Rooting Reflex**

- **Purpose:** Helps the baby locate the breast or bottle for feeding.
- **If retained:** May cause hypersensitivity around the mouth or speech difficulties.

## **Spinal Galant Reflex**

- **Purpose:** Assists with birth and early spinal movement.
- **If retained:** Can cause fidgeting, bedwetting, or discomfort in seated positions.

## **Foot Tendon Guard Reflex**

- **Purpose:** Protective response in the feet during stress.
- **If retained:** May contribute to toe-walking, balance issues, or a guarded posture.

### **Why we work with reflexes:**

Unintegrated reflexes can keep the nervous system in a heightened state, making everyday tasks feel harder than they need to be. By identifying and integrating them through gentle brain-body work, we help relieve this “silent stress” and support your child’s development, learning, and emotional wellbeing.

If you have questions or notice changes over the next few weeks, feel free to reach out. Integration takes time — and the nervous system often needs rest, hydration, and movement to fully settle into new patterns.