



# Primitive Reflexes: What They Are and Why They Matter

## What Are Primitive Reflexes?

Primitive reflexes are automatic movement patterns present at birth that help babies survive and develop. Normally, these reflexes integrate (or “turn off”) as the brain matures, allowing more controlled and voluntary movements.

## Why Do Primitive Reflexes Matter?

If primitive reflexes don't fully integrate, it can affect posture, coordination, attention, behaviour, and learning — often leading to difficulties in both children and adults.

## How We Assess Primitive Reflexes

I use gentle, targeted tests to identify which reflexes may be active and interfering with your or your child's nervous system function.

## How We Work to Integrate Reflexes

Through specific functional neurology techniques and exercises, we help your nervous system quiet these reflexes — improving motor skills, focus, emotional regulation, and overall wellbeing.

## Who Can Benefit?

- Children with behavioural challenges, learning difficulties, or coordination problems
- Adults experiencing chronic pain, poor balance, or neurological symptoms
- Anyone wanting to improve their brain-body connection and function

## How Primitive Reflexes Show Up in Kids

Primitive reflexes are the automatic movements babies are born with — like the startle reflex or the sucking reflex. They're supposed to switch off as the brain develops. But sometimes, they don't. And when these reflexes stay "switched on" longer than they should, they can interfere with a child's behaviour, emotions, movement, and learning.

You might not see the reflex itself, but you'll see the *effects*:

## Behavioral challenges

- Constant fidgeting or wriggling
- Can't sit still or focus at school

- Always in trouble for "not listening" or being "naughty"
- Emotional outbursts or meltdowns over small things
- Avoids certain tasks or activities

## **Learning and cognition**

- Difficulty reading or writing
- Struggles with sequencing or following instructions
- Poor memory or attention span
- Skips words or lines while reading
- Reverses letters or numbers

## **Sleep, toileting, and body awareness**

- Bedwetting beyond the usual age
- Fearful or anxious at bedtime
- Poor coordination or clumsiness
- Doesn't seem to know where their body is in space

## **Sensory overwhelm or anxiety**

- Overreacts to lights, sounds, touch, or textures
- Highly sensitive or anxious in new environments
- Easily frustrated or overwhelmed

## **Could This Be Your Child?**

- Struggles with focus, attention, or sitting still
- Often anxious, easily overwhelmed, or emotionally reactive
- Meltdowns seem to come out of nowhere
- Difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep
- Poor coordination, balance, or posture
- Sensitive to clothing tags, noises, lights, or touch
- Finds it hard to calm down — even with routines
- Seems “wired” or constantly in motion

- Has trouble keeping up at school, despite being bright
- Gets frustrated easily or avoids tasks that require effort

If several of these feel familiar, your child may have retained primitive reflexes — patterns in the nervous system that can impact behaviour, learning, and emotional regulation. The good news? These can be gently addressed and integrated to support calmer, more connected development.

## **How Primitive Reflexes Show Up in Adults**

Most people think of primitive reflexes as something only babies have — but when these reflexes don't fully integrate during development, they can remain active well into adulthood.

In adults, retained reflexes can contribute to:

### **Chronic Tension or Poor Posture**

Ongoing tightness in the neck, jaw, shoulders, or hips that doesn't improve with typical treatments.

### **Restlessness or Inability to Relax**

Fidgeting, constant movement, or difficulty sitting still — even when you're tired or trying to rest.

### **Anxiety or Feeling “On Edge”**

A nervous system stuck in fight-or-flight can make it hard to feel calm, grounded, or emotionally steady.

### **Depression or Emotional Flatness**

You might feel low, disconnected, or emotionally numb, even when life seems fine on the outside.

### **Trouble Focusing or Processing Information**

Difficulty with memory, concentration, or learning new things — often brushed off as stress or aging.

### **Negative Reactions to Nervous System “Hacks”**

Things like meditation, breathwork, or cold plunges leave you feeling worse, not better.

### **Sensory Sensitivities**

Overreacting to light, sound, touch, or crowded environments — even if it seems subtle or inconsistent.

### **Chronic Pain**

Pain that keeps coming back or doesn't respond to hands-on treatments alone.

### **Feeling Stuck**

A vague but persistent sense of being mentally, emotionally, or physically stuck — without clear reason.

Many adults blame themselves or feel frustrated that nothing seems to help. But often, the issue is neurological — and once we identify which reflexes are still active, we can gently guide the nervous system toward a calmer, more regulated state.

### **Could This Be You?**

- You feel constantly “on edge” or anxious, even when nothing is wrong
  - You struggle to sit still, relax, or switch off — even when you’re exhausted
  - You’ve tried meditation or breathwork, but it makes you feel worse or agitated
  - You feel drained or dysregulated after cold plunges or nervous system "hacks"
  - You carry chronic tension in your neck, jaw, shoulders, or hips
  - You often feel low, flat, or stuck emotionally — even when life is “fine”
  - You’ve been told everything looks “normal,” but you know something’s not right
  - You feel easily overwhelmed by noise, touch, or bright lights
  - You’ve tried other treatments, but your pain or stress keeps coming back
- If several of these feel familiar, retained primitive reflexes may be playing a role — and they can be gently addressed through functional neurology.

For more information please email [promcoastmuscle@gmail.com](mailto:promcoastmuscle@gmail.com) and I will get back to you as soon as possible.

Yours in health,

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