

Neonatal Reflexes

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Definition: Neonatal reflexes are inborn reflexes which are present at birth and occur in a predictable fashion. A normally developing newborn should respond to certain stimuli with these reflexes, which eventually become inhibited as the child matures

Moro Reflex:

Stimulated by a sudden movement or loud noise.

- A normally developing neonate will respond by throwing out the arms and legs and then pulling them towards the body (Children's Health Encyclopedia).
- Emerges 8-9 weeks in utero, and is inhibited by 16 weeks (Gruppen).

Palmar Grasp

- Stimulated when an object is placed into the baby's palm.
- A normally developing neonate responds by grasping the object.
- This reflex emerges 11 wks in utero, and is inhibited 2-3 months after birth.
- A persistent palmar grasp reflex may cause issues such as swallowing problems and delayed speech (Gruppen).

Babinski (Plantar) Reflex

- Stimulated by stroking the sole of the foot:
 - toes of the foot should fan out
 - the foot itself should curl in.
- Emerges at 18 weeks in utero and disappears by 6 months after birth (Gruppen)

Asymmetric Tonic Neck Reflex

- The child is placed on their back and will: – make fists – turn their head to the right.

- This reflex is present at 18 wks in utero
- Disappears by 6 months after birth (Gruppen)

Tonic Labyrinthine Reflex

- Arms and legs extend when head moves backward (away from spine), and will curl in when the head moves forward.

Galant Reflex

- The neonate's back is stimulated – their trunk and hips should move toward the side of the stimulus.
- This reflex emerges 20 wks in utero and is inhibited by 9 months.
- This turning of the torso aids in neonatal and toddler movement, such as crawling and walking.
- However, if the reflex persists, it can affect walking posture

Stepping Reflex

- Neonate will make walking motions with legs and feet when held in an upright position with the feet touching the ground.
- This reflex appears at birth, lasts for 3-4 months, then reappears at 12-24 months.

Landau's Reflex

- When neonate is placed on stomach, their back arches and head raises.
- Emerges at 3 months postnatally and lasts until the child is 12 months old.
- If this reflex does not occur, it is an indication of a motor development issue
 - generalized intellectual impairment
 - cerebral palsy

Rooting Reflex

- The baby's cheek is stroked:
 - they respond by turning their head towards the stimulus
 - they start sucking, thus allowing for breastfeeding.
- This reflex is inhibited anywhere between 6 and

Primitive Reflexes and Swallowing

- Some primitive reflexes interfere with achievement of swallowing.
 - If the Moro Reflex is strong...
 - there can be many interruptions with feeding if the child is constantly reacting to noises or sudden movements
 - A present Tonic Labyrinthine Reflex ...
 - may cause problems with the holding and/or positioning for feeding,
 - can also change the position of hypopharynx, leaving less room in the esophagus for food to travel.
 - A strong Asymmetric Tonic Neck Reflex ...
 - can cause constant lateral head turning which may cause problems for feeding (Jacobson, p.44).

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THANK YOU