

NEONATAL REFLEX BEHAVIORS

Reflexes are the newborn's most obvious organized patterns of behavior. Reflexes are inborn, automatic responses to a particular form of stimulation. Some reflexes seem to have survival value (breathing, swallowing, rooting, sucking, etc.) Most newborn reflexes disappear during the first 6 months of life due to a gradual increase in voluntary control over behavior as the brain matures. Reflexes are also important in that they provide a means for assessing the integrity of an infant's nervous system. In brain damaged infants, reflexes may be weak or nonexistent.

1. MORO REFLEX (or "startle" reflex)
 - A. extension of legs, arms, and fingers; arches back; draws back head
 - B. extinguishes between 2 to 3 months
2. ROOTING REFLEX
 - A. Head turns; mouth opens; sucking motion begins
 - B. Extinguishes between 3 to 4 months
3. GRASPING REFLEX
 - A. Makes strong fist
 - B. Extinguishes between 3 to 4 months
4. TONIC NECK REFLEX
 - A. turns head to side; extends arms/legs on preferred side, flexes opposite limbs
5. STEPPING REFLEX
 - A. makes steplike motions that look like walking
 - B. extinguishes between three to four months
6. BABINSKI REFLEX
 - A. toes fan out; foot twists in
 - B. seen up until about one year at which time reflex reverses to toes curling in
7. SUCKING REFLEXES
 - A. response to nipple or bottle
 - B. essential to live
8. REFLEXES WHICH REMAIN PAST THE NEONATAL STAGE
 - A. blinking, yawning, coughing, gagging, sneezing, pupillary response, etc.