

Quick Study Guide

Topic: Lifespan Development – The Neonate - Reflexes

Related Course(s): Psych 1100, 2800, 3000, 3200

Lifespan Development - Reflexes – Key Terms

Reflexes: A neonate (newborn) is born with a number of **reflexes** - unlearned, involuntary responses that occur automatically in the presence of certain stimuli. Reflexes are considered critical for survival, many of those reflexes unfold naturally as part of an infant's ongoing maturation. Soon, most reflexes will fade away and be replaced with learned behavior.

Rooting reflex – neonates to turn their heads toward any object that gently stimulates their cheeks, such as the mother's nipple or a bottle. It is said that this reflex is a 'way to search for food'.

Sucking reflex – a combination of tongue and lip muscles move to create a sucking action when something touches an infant's lips.

Gag reflex – an infant will reflexively gag to clear the throat

Grasp reflex – in response to stimulation of the palm of the hand, an infant will reflexively close it's hand and grasp. If you ever put your finger in a baby's palm, you know that it's a grasp that won't let go.

Moro (or Startle) reflex – in response to a loud noise or physical shock, a newborn will fling its arms outward, fan the fingers, and arch the back. In contrast, as an adult, think about a loud noise behind you – you have learned to pull your arms in and curl your back.

Babinski reflex – in response to a touch on the bottom of the foot, a baby's toes fan out and then curl in. As adults, our toes just curl in.

Stepping reflex – if you hold a baby with it's feet just touching a surface, they will advance their feet in a stepping motion, one foot after the other

Swimming reflex – similar to the stepping reflex, if you hold a baby in the prone (face down) position just touching the surface of water, a neonate will reflexively move their arms and legs in a swimming motion.