

Neonatology – Important Neonatal Reflexes

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Reflexes

- Rooting Reflex
- Sucking & Swallowing Reflexes
- Moro Reflex
- Palmar Grasp Reflex

Rooting Reflex

- Rooting Reflex helps the baby to locate the mother's nipple without her directing the baby's mouth.
- The infant turns toward the point where the cheek is touched. When the corner of the mouth is touched, the lower lip is lowered, and the tongue is brought forward toward the contact. If the finger is moved away, the head turns to follow it.

Sucking & Swallowing Reflexes

- Elicited by introducing clean finger or mother's teat in the mouth. They disappear when voluntary control of the feeding is achieved.
- They are decreased or absent when there is any neurological depression, hypotonia, or immaturity.
- A baby would have usually crossed 34 weeks of gestation when he/she can feed directly from breast.

Moro Reflex

- It is a vestibular reflex, which disappears by 3 – 5 months of age.
- It can be elicited by raising the shoulder for 45 degree from ground and then dropping by 30 degree.
- There will be abduction and extension of arms with opening of fingers.
- This is followed by flexion and adduction of arms.
- The reflex may be accompanied by crying, extension of trunk and neck with movements of legs.
- It is exaggerated when there is a cerebral irritation caused by hypoxia, infection, hyperbilirubinemia etc.
- It is decreased with sedation, central nervous system depression, or prematurity. Asymmetrical response is seen with Erb's palsy, clavicle or humerus fracture, or shoulder dislocation.

Palmar Grasp Reflex

- It is elicited by touching the baby's palm from the ulnar side with finger or any other suitable object. The fingers close and grasp the object.
- When the dorsum of the hand is touched, the fingers open.
- The grasp become stronger, if the head is turned to the opposite side, and the stimulating finger is moved toward the fingers.
- Similar reflex can be elicited in the lower limb by stimulating the sole.
- Persistence of grasp after 3 months of age may indicate cerebral palsy.

Thank you