



Reflexes - What is a reflex?

Fact

- A reflex action is an automatic action that our body makes without us even having to think about it.
- A reflex action is a survival technique that humans have.
- Coughing when something gets caught in your throat is a reflex action.
- Jumping when you get a fright (like Little Miss Muffet did with the spider) is a reflex action
- Moving quickly away from something that's causing you pain, like when you back into a prickly bush :o) is another reflex action.
- Blinking when something moves quickly towards your face is a reflex action too.
- The pupils in our eyes close and widen in a reflex action allowing only enough light into our eyes for us to see things clearly. The darker it is the wider our pupils grow.

Do you know

- Most of our reflexes have been developed over hundreds of thousands of years.
- Reflex actions are often a response to something that could hurt us – that's why we move so quickly.
- When we're reacting to pain the part of our body that's feeling the pain sends a message straight to the part of our body that will move us away from that pain quickly bypassing our brain.
- An action that we decide to make like to pick up a book and read or bite into an apple is called a voluntary action.
- There are other movements that our body does all the time without us thinking about it like breathing and our heart working. These are called involuntary actions.

Experiments you can do

Test your reflexes

What you need:

A ruler

Someone to help you

What you do:

Hold out your hand and have someone hold the ruler above your hand so that it's pointing up and down towards the ground. Get your friend to drop the ruler and see how long it takes you to grab it. You'll get an idea how long it takes by where you grab the ruler. Keep practising and see if you can get faster and grabbing the ruler.

Other Investigations

Blink Reflexes

What you need:

A window or ranchslider

Some cotton wool balls

Someone to help you

What you do:

Have your friend stand on the other side of the window. Explain what you're going to do. Gently throw a cotton wool ball at the window at the level of their eyes and see if they blink. They may try really hard not to blink but it's a reflex action and they will probably blink every time.

Jokes

Why did Little Miss Muffet need a road map?

She lost her whey.

From Kirstie