

Spine

A Spine-Tingling Slam Dunk!

Imagine a basketball player slam-dunking a ball into a net. To do so, he runs toward the net, bends his knees, and jumps. This lifts his body off the ground. He twists around to avoid the defender, slams the ball into the net, and lands back on the ground, unharmed. How was he able to do all of this? With the help of his *spine*!

Your spine holds your head upright and allows you to bend, move, and twist your upper body. Spongy parts of the spine help absorb the shock of landing from a jump. Your spine also protects and supports your *spinal cord*, a very important part of your nervous system. The spinal cord is a bundle of nerves that sends information between the brain and other parts of the body. Lastly, the long spine gives your body its shape—tall and upright. Is the spine important? Talk about a slam dunk!

Do You Know?

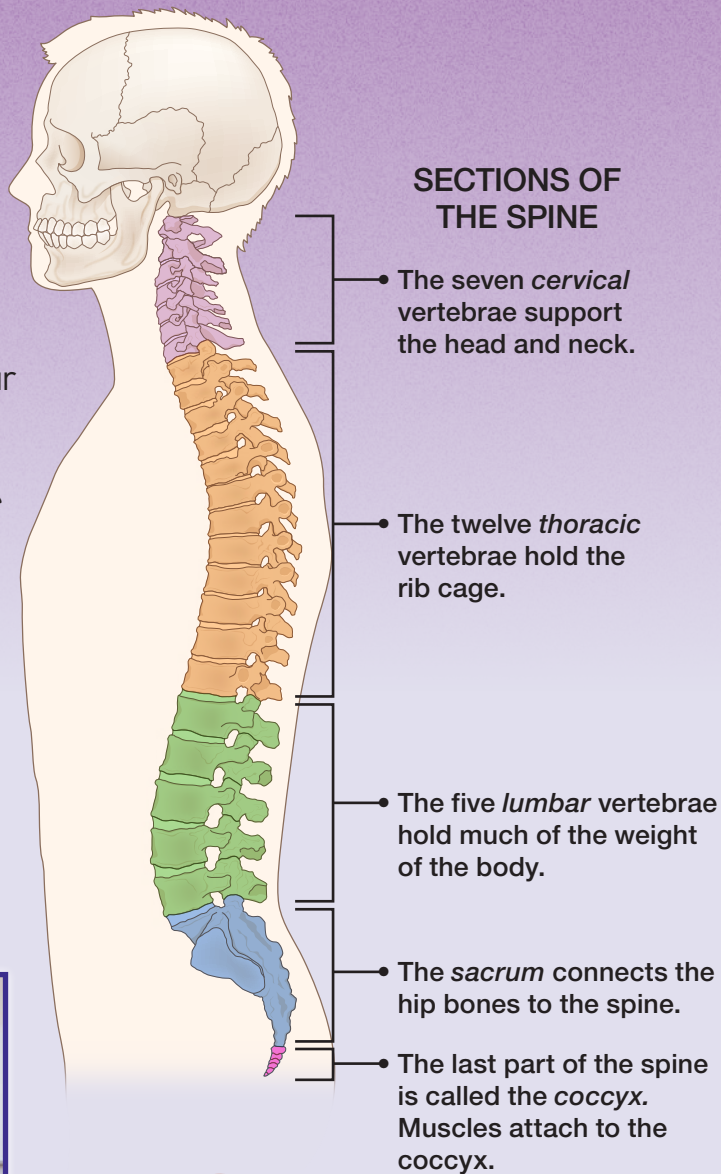
You might not be able to dunk yet, but don't worry! Your spine is made of living tissue, and the bones will grow, just like the rest of your body. Someday, that slam dunk might not be so far out of reach.



Sit Up Straight!

Have you ever been told to “sit up straight” while slouching? People tell you this for an extremely important reason: they are concerned about your posture and the health of your spine.

The spine is slightly curved and is made up of twenty-six bones. These bones are called *vertebrae*. Each vertebra is shaped like a ring with a hole for the spinal cord to pass through. Reach around to the middle of your back. Do you feel hard and rigid bumps? Those are the vertebrae in your spine. Sit up straight and keep them in line!



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Long-necked giraffes and humans both have seven cervical vertebrae. The main difference is simply the size of the bones.

Taking Care of Your Spine

Sitting all day at school can weaken your spine. It can cause back pain and bad posture. Exercises such as yoga and stretching will keep your spine strong and flexible. Also, be active at recess and at home. Moving is much better for your spine than “vegging out” in front of a TV or computer.



Stretching can help keep your spine healthy!