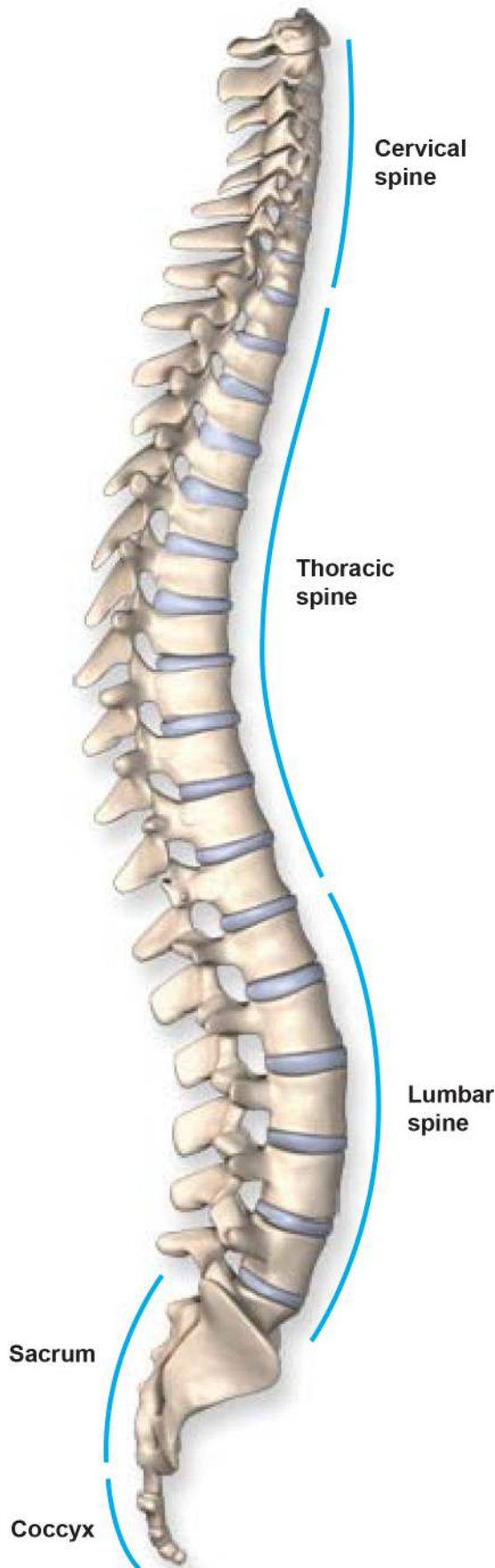




Anatomy of the Spine



Overview

The spinal column is the body's main support structure. Its thirty-three bones, called vertebrae, are divided into five regions: cervical, thoracic, lumbar, sacral and coccygeal.

Cervical Region

The cervical region consists of seven vertebrae labeled C1 to C7. The first cervical vertebra is called the atlas. The second is called the axis. Together, the atlas and axis form the joint that connects the spine to the skull and allows the head to swivel and nod.

Thoracic Region

The thoracic region, located in the mid-back, consists of twelve vertebrae labeled T1 to T12. These vertebrae serve as attachment points for the ribcage.

Lumbar Region

The lumbar region, commonly called the lower back, consists of five vertebrae labeled L1 to L5. This is the main weight-bearing section of the spinal column.

Sacral region

The sacral region consists of five fused vertebrae labeled S1 to S5. These vertebrae form a solid mass of bone, called the sacrum, which provides the attachment point for the pelvis.

Coccygeal Region

The coccygeal region, commonly called the tailbone, consists of four small vertebrae. These tiny bones may be fused or separate. Together they form the coccyx, an attachment point for various muscles, tendons and ligaments. The coccyx also helps support the body when a person is sitting.

Vertebrae

All together, the vertebrae of the spine's five regions support the weight of the body and protect the spinal cord and nerve roots. Each individual vertebra has a complex set of structures necessary to the overall function of the spine.

Vertebral Body

The main structure of a vertebra is the vertebral body -- a cylinder-shaped section of bone at the front of the vertebra. It is the main weight-bearing section of the vertebra.