

A light blue, stylized outline of a human figure, showing the head, neck, shoulders, and spine, positioned in the background of the page.

ANATOMY AND FUNCTION OF THE SPINE



**NORTON
LEATHERMAN
SPINE CENTER**



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Your spine gives your body
structure and support, allowing you
to bend with flexibility
and move about freely.

The purpose of the spine is
to protect your spinal cord,
which is a collection of nerves that
connects your brain to the rest of your body,
allowing you to control your movements and
assisting with the function of your organs.

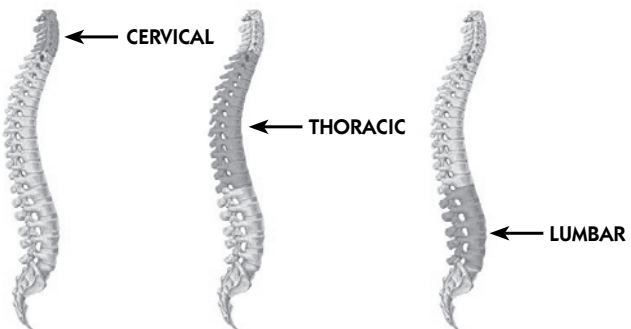




The spine is made up of 24 bones called vertebrae. Between each of these bones is a gel-like cushion called a disc that absorbs pressure and keeps the bones from rubbing together. Each vertebrae is held together by groups of ligaments. Ligaments connect bone to bone and tendons connect muscle to bone. The spinal column has joints – much like your elbow or your knee – called facet joints. These facet joints link the vertebrae together and give them the flexibility to move. Each vertebrae has a hole in the center, so when stacked on top of each other they form a hollow tube that protects the entire spinal cord and holds it in place.

The spine is divided into three segments: cervical, thoracic, and lumbar. The cervical (neck) spine is the upper part of the spine consisting of seven small vertebrae starting at the base of your skull. The thoracic spine (middle back) contains twelve larger vertebrae. The lumbar spine (low back) generally contains five vertebrae. Some people have six lumbar vertebrae; however, this does not seem to cause a problem. Finally, the sacral area is a collection of specialized vertebrae that are naturally fused together and connect the spine to the pelvis.

The normal spine is “S” shaped when viewed from the side, and is straight when viewed from the front or back. This allows for an even distribution of weight and gives your body the ability to withstand stress.



This brochure is not a substitute for medical care. It has been developed by your physician to help you better understand your spine condition, surgery and post-operative instructions. Please be advised that the statements made within this brochure are intended for general information use only. Your condition or course of treatment may vary. Please check with your physician for variances.

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