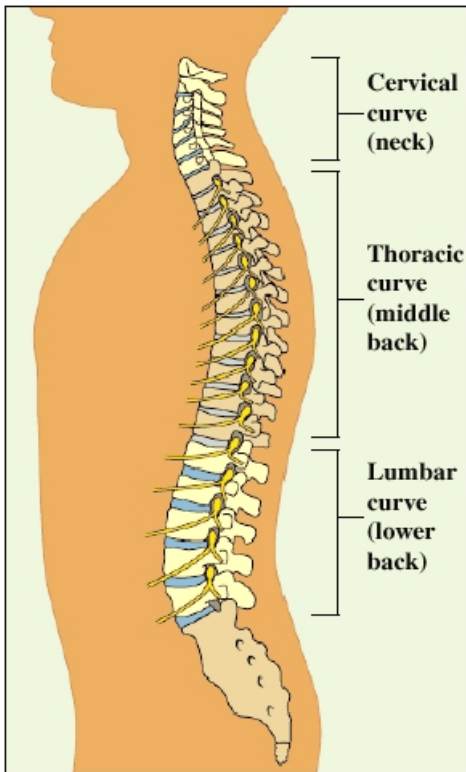


Anatomy of a Normal Spine

The spinal column is a stack of bones (vertebrae). They are separated by soft pads of tissue (disks). In the middle of each of these bones, a canal that runs top to bottom. These canals form a tunnel called the spinal canal. Running through the spinal canal is a long bundle of nerves and nerve cells called the spinal cord. These nerve fibers carry signals between the brain and body. The spinal cord is surrounded by the cerebrospinal fluid and protective layers called meninges, just like the brain.

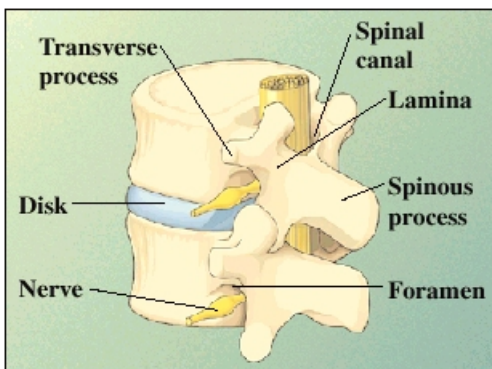


The spine has three natural curves: the cervical, the thoracic, and the lumbar.

The parts of the spine

The spine is made up of these parts:

- **The vertebrae** are the 24 bones that connect like puzzle pieces to make up the spine.
- The **lamina** of each vertebra forms the back of the spinal canal.
- A **foramen** is a small bony opening. This is where a nerve, on each side of the spinal cord, leaves the spinal canal.
- **The transverse process** is the wing of bone on either side of each vertebra.
- **The spinous process** is the back part of each vertebra you can feel through your skin.
- A **disk** lies between each of the vertebrae and acts as a cushion.



Two vertebrae with a disk between them

