

THE SPINE

(Collated by Michelle Wilkinson www.movingnaturally.co.uk)

The spine is composed of 31-33 bones. There are 7 cervical vertebrae in the neck, 12 thoracic vertebrae for rib attachment, 5 lumbar vertebrae in the lower back, 5 fused vertebrae form the sacrum an attachment site for the two pelvic (ilium) bones.

There are 4 natural spinal curves. If the curves of the head and tail bone are included, then there are 6 curves.

The cervical and lumbar sections of the spine concave curve forwards while the thoracic and sacral sections convex curve backwards.

Viewed from the side only the upper 2 cervical vertebrae and the upper lumbar vertebra are on the vertical plane.

The lumbar region of the spine has the greatest built in flexibility and capacity for strength. It supports the entire spine, shoulders, arms and head.

To lighten and support the human body, you can lengthen the spine by diminishing the 4 spinal curves.

The abdominal muscles at the front of the body support the lumbar curvature.

The springiness of the inter-vertebral discs of the spine allows a wide range of movement and are natural shock absorbers. In shiatsu to create space within these joints you can rock the individual vertebrae with your thumb and index finger.

In the law of nature, the bony skeleton counteracts gravitational pull leaving the muscles free to allow the body to move.

The movement of the body is organised around spinal action. Within all movement there is a draw either into or away from the spine.