

The Skeletal System

Name _____

Without a skeleton, our bodies would have no support and would flop. Your skeleton consists of 206 bones all linked together. The primary function of the skeleton is to support (shape) your body and protect the soft organs inside.

The skull or cranium protects your brain like a helmet. The spine is made up of 6 - 33 (depending on how you count them) small bones called vertebrae. It is like a flexible chain that keeps you standing straight yet lets you bend. It protects your spinal cord, the thick bundle of nerves that connects your body to your brain. The heart and lungs are protected by the 12 pairs (or 24) curved bones of the ribs. The organs in the lower body are protected by the pelvis.

When we are born our bones are soft and elastic. Cells gradually deposit calcium that hardens the bone. An area of specialized cells in the long bones when you are growing taller is called the growth plate. Bones have a hard white coating but are almost hollow. They are filled with marrow that makes blood cells.

More than half of all our bones are in the hands, feet, ankles, and wrists. Bones meet up with each other at over 100 spots called joints. There are several different types of joints. An example of a ball and socket joint is hip (OR) shoulder. An example of a hinge joint is the knee joint. A pivotal joint is the wrist (OR) ankle. Bones are connected together by stretchy cords called ligaments. The kneecap is the only bone not tied to another by ligaments.

Many disorders may strike the bones. Two examples of such disorders would be: osteoporosis and arthritis. (samples only – answers will vary)