

The Skeleton

Body & health

206 bones, grouped the way anatomists group them, with the ones worth naming.

The adult skeleton has 206 bones in two divisions: the axial skeleton down the midline, and the appendicular skeleton of the limbs and the girdles that attach them.

ADULT BONES
206

VERTEBRAE
33

RIBS
24 (12 pairs)

- Axial (80): skull, spine, ribs, sternum.
- Appendicular (126): arms, legs, shoulder and pelvic girdles.
- The spine has 33 vertebrae: 7 cervical, 12 thoracic, 5 lumbar, then the fused sacrum and coccyx.
- The femur is the longest and strongest bone; the stapes in the ear is the smallest.
- Babies are born with about 270 bones; many fuse during growth.
- Over half of all bones are in the hands and feet — 27 in each hand, 26 in each foot.

LOOK FOR IT

Seven cervical vertebrae — the same number in a human neck as in a giraffe's.

Bone is living tissue: it remodels constantly, and load is what keeps it dense.