**Vertebral Column**

**Key Features**

- Encloses and protects the spinal cord.
- Provides attachment sites for muscles of the head, neck, and trunk.
- Vertebrae are named for region and vertical order.
- C1 and C2 are specialized to articulate with and support the skull.
- Sacrum and Coccyx contribute to posterior wall of pelvis.
- Intervertebral disc —
  - Nucleus pulposus is inner gel-like substance;
  - Anulus fibrosus is outer ring of collagen and cartilage.
  - Absorbs shock, allows flexibility.

**Clinical Correlations**

- Distorted Spinal Curvatures
  - Scoliosis — Lateral curvature of vertebral column.
- Herniated Disc
  - Fissure in anulus fibrosus allows nucleus pulposus to bulge, compress nerves; causes deficits and pain.