**Muscular System Information**

Did you know you have more than 600 muscles in your body? They do everything from pumping blood throughout your body to helping you lift your heavy backpack. You control some of your muscles, while others — like your heart — do their jobs without you thinking about them at all. You have three different types of muscles in your body: **smooth** muscle, **cardiac** muscle, and **skeletal** muscle.

**Smooth Muscles**

Smooth muscles are called **involuntary muscles** because you can't control this type of muscle. Your brain and body tell these muscles what to do without you even thinking about it. You can't use your smooth muscles to make a muscle in your arm or jump into the air.

But smooth muscles are at work all over your body. In your stomach and digestive system, they contract (tighten up) and relax to allow food to make its journey through the body. Your smooth muscles come in handy if you're sick and you need to throw up. The muscles push the food back out of the stomach so it comes up through the **esophagus** and out of the mouth.

Smooth muscles are also found in your bladder. When they're relaxed, they allow you to hold in [urine](http://kidshealth.org/kid/word/u/word_urine.html) until you can get to the bathroom. Then they contract so that you can push the urine out. These muscles are also in a woman's uterus, which is where a baby develops. There they help to push the baby out of the mother's body when it's time to be born.

You'll find smooth muscles at work behind the scenes in your eyes, too. These muscles keep the eyes focused.

**Cardiac Muscle**

The muscle that makes up the heart is called cardiac muscle. The thick muscles of the heart contract to pump [blood](http://kidshealth.org/kid/talk/qa/blood.html) out and then relax to let blood back in after it has circulated through the body.

Just like smooth muscle, cardiac muscle works all by itself with no help from you. A special group of cells within the heart are known as the pacemaker of the heart because it controls the heartbeat.

**Skeletal Muscle**

Now, let's talk about the kind of muscle you think of when we say "muscle" — the ones that show how strong you are and let you boot a soccer ball into the goal.

Skeletal muscles are voluntary muscles, which means you can control what they do. Your leg won't bend to kick the soccer ball unless you want it to. Together, the skeletal muscles work with your bones to give your body power and strength. In most cases, a skeletal muscle is attached to one end of a bone. It stretches all the way across a joint (the place where two bones meet) and then attaches again to another bone. They work in pairs to move your body. One muscle will contract (get shorter) while another one relaxes (returns to its original length) to bend you at a joint. Then, those same muscles will do the opposite to straighten you at a joint.

Skeletal muscles are held to the bones with the help of **tendons**. Tendons are cords made of tough tissue, and they work as special connector pieces between bone and muscle. The tendons are attached so well that when you contract one of your muscles, the tendon and bone move along with it.

**Muscle Disorders**

* Muscle strain or muscle pull or even a muscle tear implies damage to a muscle or its attaching tendons.
* A muscle cramp is an involuntarily and forcibly contracted muscle that does not relax. This may be due to [dehydration](http://www.emedicinehealth.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=59284), low blood levels of calcium, magnesium, or potassium, or from certain medications.

**Factoids**

* You have over 30 facial muscles which create looks like surprise, happiness, sadness, and frowning.
* Eye muscles are the busiest muscles in the body. Scientists estimate they may move more than 100,000 times a day!
* The largest muscle in the body is the gluteus maximus muscle in the buttocks.