



# Bones grow

Your bones are not made of unchanging material, but grow and change shape throughout your life.

If you look at pictures of yourself when you were a baby and compare them with pictures of you now, you will see many changes (Picture 1). You are much bigger than you were, but you are also a different shape. This is because of the way that your bones grow.

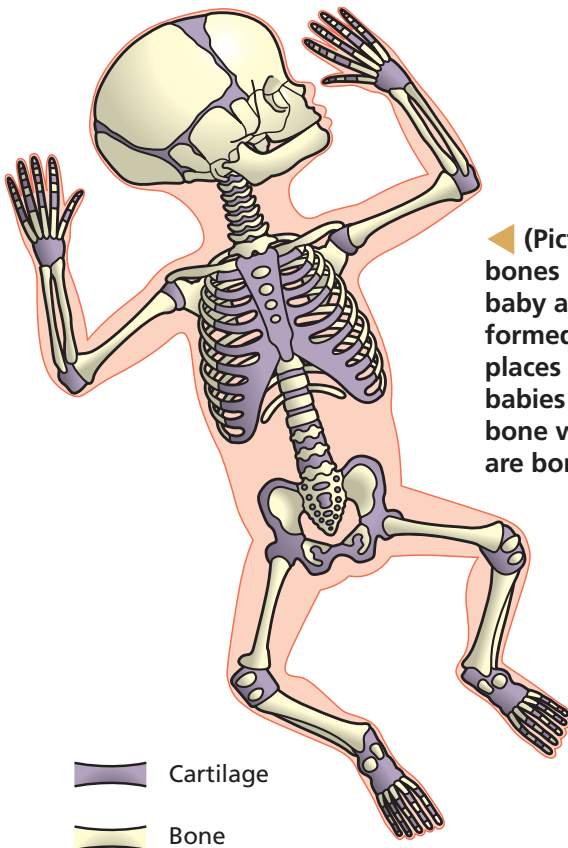


Aged under 1

Aged about 11

## Live bones grow

When you are born, some of your bones are not even formed, but are made of soft material called cartilage. This is one reason babies have to be handled with care (Picture 2).



◀ (Picture 2) The bones in a newborn baby are not fully formed. The shaded places show where babies do not have bone when they are born.

▲ (Picture 1) As you grow bigger, your face grows longer at a faster rate than it grows wider. This is why babies have rounder faces than adults.



Bones mainly grow at their ends. This is why you grow much taller than wider (Picture 3). Of course, your bones also grow thicker. If they did not, they would be too thin and liable to break.

## Old bones change

Even once you have grown up your bones do not stop changing. In fact, your bones will continue changing throughout your life. Until the age of about 35, people add

more new bone than is needed to replace old bone. As a result, they tend to get bigger. After this, they may begin to lose more bone than they grow. This is why some old people become smaller and why their bones become thinner and more liable to break.

### Summary

- Bones continue to grow throughout your life.
- Bones grow bigger until middle age. Then they stop, and finally get smaller.

▼ (Picture 3) As you grow you get much taller than wider.

