



FIGURE 13-1: Central and peripheral nervous systems. The brain and the spinal cord make up the central nervous system. The PNS contains nerves outside the brain and spinal cord that lead to the arms, legs, hands, and feet. The autonomic nervous system is part of the PNS.

considered **adrenergic**, which excites the body. These cholinergic and adrenergic substances are naturally occurring in the body, but the substances must be provided artificially when the body's reaction is not appropriate to counteract disease states. The next section describes in more detail when cholinergic and adrenergic drugs are used and why.

■ THE AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM AND MEDICATIONS

Autonomic drugs stimulate the sympathetic nervous system when the body needs to be excited. These drugs are also called **sympathomimetics** or adrenergic agonists. Drugs that stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system calm the nervous system. They are also called **parasympathomimetics** or **cholinergic agonists**.