

The brachial plexus extends from the neck to the axilla and supplies the upper limb. It is formed from the ventral rami of C5, C6, C7, C8 and T1; branches from the ventral rami of C4 and T2 may also contribute. These five ventral rami emerge from between the anterior and middle scalene muscles.

The ventral rami of C5 and C6 unite to form the upper trunk, the ventral ramus of C7 continues as the middle trunk and the ventral rami of C8 and T1 unite to form the lower trunk. Behind the middle of the clavicle, each trunk divides into anterior and posterior divisions.

The posterior divisions of all three trunks merge to form the posterior cord (C5, C6, C7, C8, T1), initially above and then behind the axillary artery; the three cords are named according to their relationship to the second part of the axillary artery as they pass into the axilla. Each cord divides into two main branches at the level of the third part of the axillary artery. The posterior cord divides into an axillary nerve (C5, C6) and radial nerve (C5, C6, C7, C8, (T1)); it also gives rise to the upper subscapular nerve (C5, C6), thoracodorsal nerve (C5, C6) and lower subscapular nerve.