

The posterior arch of C1 (atlas) forms most of a ring that represents the pedicles and laminae of a typical cervical vertebra. Immediately behind the lateral mass, the posterior arch is grooved on its superior surface by the **vertebral artery** and vein and first cervical spinal nerve. This groove may be converted into a foramen (arcuate foramen) by cartilaginous or bony tissue (posterior ponticle) that bridges the posterior aspect of the lateral mass and the posterior arch. The posterior tubercle represents a rudimentary spinous process and gives attachment to the ligamentum nuchae. The **rectus capitis posterior minor** muscles attach lateral to the posterior tubercle. The superior and inferior borders give attachment to the posterior atlanto-occipital membrane and ligament flava, respectively.