

The vertebral venous plexus, of which there is an external and internal part, provides venous drainage for the individual vertebrae of the spinal column.

The external venous plexus, which is best developed in the cervical region, is further subdivided into anterior and posterior parts, which surround the vertebral column. The posterior external plexus is located within the muscles lying posterior to the transverse processes, spinous processes, articular processes and the laminae of the vertebrae. It communicates freely with the internal vertebral venous plexuses via the intervertebral veins. Depending on the part of the vertebral column being drained the external vertebral venous plexus drains into (i) vertebral veins, which in turn drain into the brachiocephalic veins, (ii) posterior intercostal veins, which in turn drain into the azygos and hemiazygos veins, (iii) the lumbar veins, which mostly drain into the inferior vena cava and (iv) the sacral plexus, which drains into the internal iliac veins.