

The third thoracic ventral rami pass into the intercostal space between the pleura and internal intercostal membrane (fascia). They then pass below the intercostal vessels in the neurovascular plane between the third internal and innermost intercostal muscles below the intercostal vessels. Before reaching the costal angle they give rise to lateral and collateral branches.

The **third lateral cutaneous branch** pierces the intercostal muscles obliquely, close to the midaxillary line before dividing into anterior and posterior branches. The anterior branch runs forwards over the pectoralis major muscle, while the posterior branch passes back over the scapula and latissimus dorsi to terminate in the overlying skin. A second intercostobrachial nerve may arise from the anterior branch supplying skin of the axilla and medial side of the arm.

The **third anterior cutaneous branch** is the terminal part of the collateral nerve. The collateral nerve follows the inferior border of its intercostal space to pierce the internal intercostal muscle, external intercostal membrane and pectoralis major muscles near the sternum where it becomes the third anterior cutaneous branch of the thorax and terminates in the overlying skin.

Supply

The third lateral cutaneous branch supplies skin over the third intercostal space and adjacent parts of the second and fourth intercostal spaces. The anterior cutaneous branches supply skin over the anterior thoracic wall of the third intercostal spaces.