Overview:

• The neck is a tube providing continuity from the head to the trunk. It extends anteriorly from the lower border of the mandible to the upper surface of the manubrium of the sternum and posteriorly from the superior nuchal line on the occipital bone of the skull to the intervertebral disc between the CVII and TI vertebrae.

• four compartments provide longitudinal organization (fig 1.0):
  • **The visceral compartment** is anterior parts of the digestive and respiratory several endocrine glands.
  • **The vertebral compartment** is posterior and contains the cervical vertebrae, spinal cord, cervical nerves, and muscles associated with the vertebral column.
  • **The two vascular compartments**, one on each side, are lateral and contain the major blood vessels and the vagus nerve [X].

All these compartments are contained within unique layers of cervical fascia.
Prevertebral fascia

The prevertebral layer is a cylindrical layer of fascia that surrounds the vertebral column and the muscles associated with it.

The prevertebral fascia is attached posteriorly along the length of the ligamentum nuchae, superiorly to the base of the skull and inferiorly to anterior longitudinal ligament of the vertebral column.

Fig 5.0 – Prevertebral layer.
Clinical Relevance: Spread of infection!

1. Between the investing and muscular part of the pretracheal, which envelops infrahyoid muscles, infection will not spread beyond the superior edge of manubrium.

2. Between the investing and visceral pretracheal layer, can spread anterior to the pericardium.

Fig 6.0 – Spread of infection.