

# THE MEDIASTINUM

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The mediastinum refers to the central area in the chest between the thoracic inlet and the diaphragm, between the right and left pleural surfaces, and which extends from the inner aspect of the sternum to the vertebral column. It contains the heart, great vessels, trachea and oesophagus and is arbitrarily subdivided into compartments (superior, inferior, anterior, middle and posterior). Many of the regional lymph node chains draining the chest and its organs are also found

- in the mediastinum. Various surgical procedures to approach structures, and particularly lymph nodes, in the mediastinum are performed, usually as diagnostic procedures. The surgical approach when mediastinal tumours require resection depends on the anatomical location of the tumour ( Figure 60.22 and includes median sternotomy for anterior mediastinal pathology , thoracotomy or VATS for posterior mediastinal pathology and transcervical (neck incisions) for superior mediastinal pathology . The middle mediastinum can usually be approached through thoracotomy or VATS. Increasingly , a robotic or RATS approach is used, particularly for anterior mediastinal tumours such as thymomas.

mediastinum  
mediastinum Thymoma Lymphoma Lymphoma Thyroid Germ cell tumour Parathyroid  
Middle mediastinum Cystic lesions Lymphoma Mesenchymal tumours Posterior mediastinum  
Neurogenic tumours Cystic lesions Mesenchymal tumours Figure 60.22 Mediastinal pathology.  
Subdivisions of the mediastinum with the most common mediastinal masses.

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