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Table 2 How to Read a Lateral Cervical Spine Radiograph
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Systematic approach (two steps): (1) Overall review (ABCS); then (2) examine each individual vertebra.

Targeted approach: Look for specific injury patterns and easily missed injuries (see [Tables 7](#) and [8](#)).

Overall Review—ABCS

Adequacy

All 7 vertebrae seen

No rotation (lateral masses superimposed)

Alignment

Four smooth lordotic curves (*drawing*)

Bones

Fractures of vertebral bodies, lateral masses, laminae, spinous processes

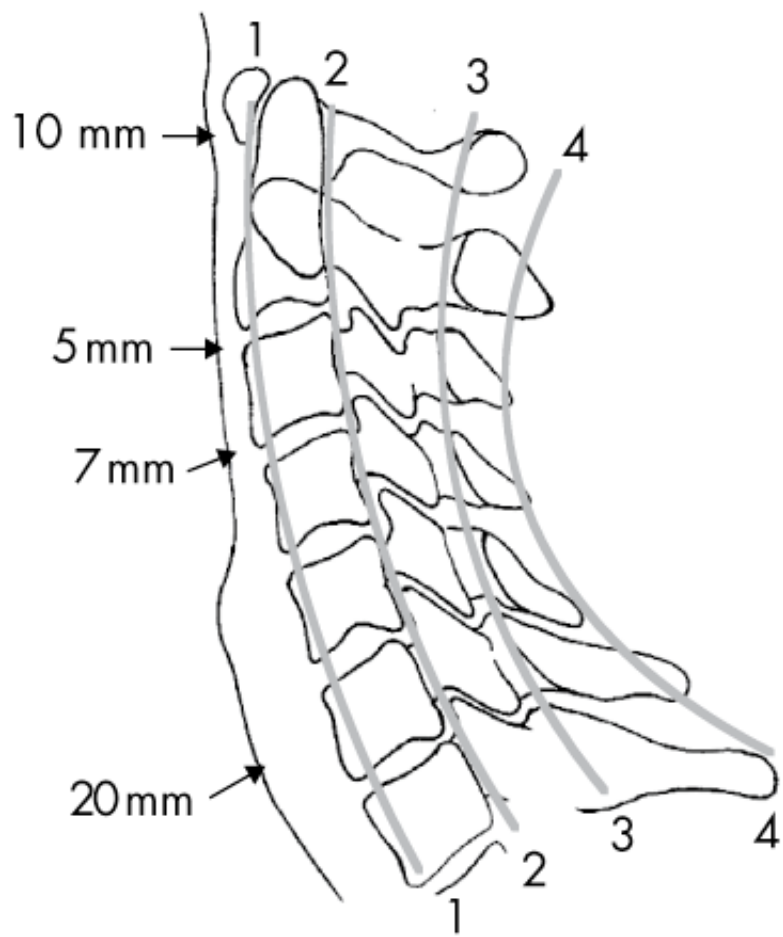
Cartilage

Intervertebral disk spaces

Interspinous process distances

Soft tissues

Prevertebral soft tissues (especially C1-C3) (upper limits of normal are shown)



Four Curves of Alignment

1. Anterior vertebral body line
2. Posterior vertebral body line
3. Spinolaminar line
4. Tips of spinous processes

Prevertebral soft tissues (*arrows*)

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