

The reticular formation is a set of interconnected nuclei that are located throughout the brainstem. The reticular formation is not anatomically well defined because it includes neurons located in different parts of the brain. The neurons of the reticular formation make up a complex set of networks in the core of the brainstem that extend from the upper part of the midbrain to the lower part of the medulla oblongata.

The reticular formation includes ascending pathways to the cortex in the ascending reticular activating system (ARAS) and descending pathways to the spinal cord via the reticulospinal tracts of the descending reticular formation.

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