Oropharynx

Because of the proximity of the oropharynx (a naturally contaminated region) to the craniocervical junction, it is possible that small mucosal lacerations in the oropharynx caused by unstable traumatic craniocervical injuries may become contaminated and lead to secondary infection and osteomyelitis.

In a report, the authors describe the case of a previously healthy and immunocompetent patient who developed a large retropharyngeal abscess with spinal osteomyelitis after a high-energy craniocervical injury. This unusual report of osteomyelitis with a delayed presentation after a high-energy traumatic injury of the craniocervical junction highlights the possibility of direct injury to a specific area in the oropharyngeal mucosa adjacent to the osteoligamentous structures of the craniocervical junction, an overall underrecognized complication of unstable craniocervical injuries [1].

1)
Goulart CR, Mattei TA, Fiore ME, Thoman WJ, Mendel E. Retropharyngeal abscess with secondary osteomyelitis and epidural abscess: proposed pathophysiological mechanism of an underrecognized complication of unstable craniocervical injuries: case report. J Neurosurg Spine. 2015 Sep 25:1-9. [Epub ahead of print] PubMed PMID: 26407087.