

Australopithecus

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Australopithecus Latest News

An unidentified early hominin fossil that might be a new species confirms that Australopithecus and Homo species lived in the same region of Africa in the same time frame.

About Australopithecus

- Australopithecus, (genus Australopithecus) is a group of **extinct primates** known from a series of **fossils found** at numerous sites in **eastern, north-central, and southern Africa**.
- They are the **closest known relatives of our genus, Homo**.
- The various species of Australopithecus lived **4.4 million to 1.4 million years ago** (mya), during the **Pliocene and Pleistocene epochs** (which lasted from 5.3 million to 11,700 years ago).
- The **genus name, meaning "southern ape,"** refers to the first fossils found, which were discovered in South Africa.
- Perhaps the **most famous specimen of Australopithecus is "Lucy,"** a remarkably preserved fossilized skeleton from **Ethiopia** that has been dated to 3.2 mya.

Australopithecus Features

- Members of Australopithecus bore a **combination of humanlike and apelike traits**.
- They had **apelike face proportions** (a flat nose, a strongly projecting lower jaw) and **braincase** (with a **small brain**, usually less than 500 cubic centimeters – about **1/3 the size of a modern human brain**), and **long, strong arms** with curved fingers adapted for climbing trees.
- They also had **small canine teeth** like all other early humans, and a **body that stood on two legs** and regularly **walked upright**.
- They were roughly 1.2-1.5 m tall and probably weighed about 30-50 kg.
- Males were almost **twice the size of females**, a level of difference, or **sexual dimorphism**, greater than modern chimpanzees or humans but less than gorillas or orangutans.
- They had **mainly a plant-based diet**, including leaves, fruit, seeds, roots, nuts, and insects.

Source: [LS](#)

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