

# Andromeda galaxy larger than thought

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The Andromeda galaxy just got bigger -- three times bigger, astronomers said on Monday.

The galaxy is not actually expanding. But new measurements suggest that the nearest galaxy to our own Milky Way is three times broader than astronomers had thought.

They now believe a thin sprinkling of stars once thought to be a halo is in fact part of Andromeda's main disk.

That makes the spiral galaxy, so close to Earth that it appeared as a fuzzy blob to the ancients, more than 220,000 light-years across -- triple the previous estimate of 70,000 to 80,000 light-years.

It appears that the outer fringes of the disk were made when smaller galaxies slammed together, they told a meeting of the American Astronomical Society in Minneapolis.

Andromeda is 2 million light-years from Earth. A light-year is the distance light travels in a year -- about 6 trillion miles.

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