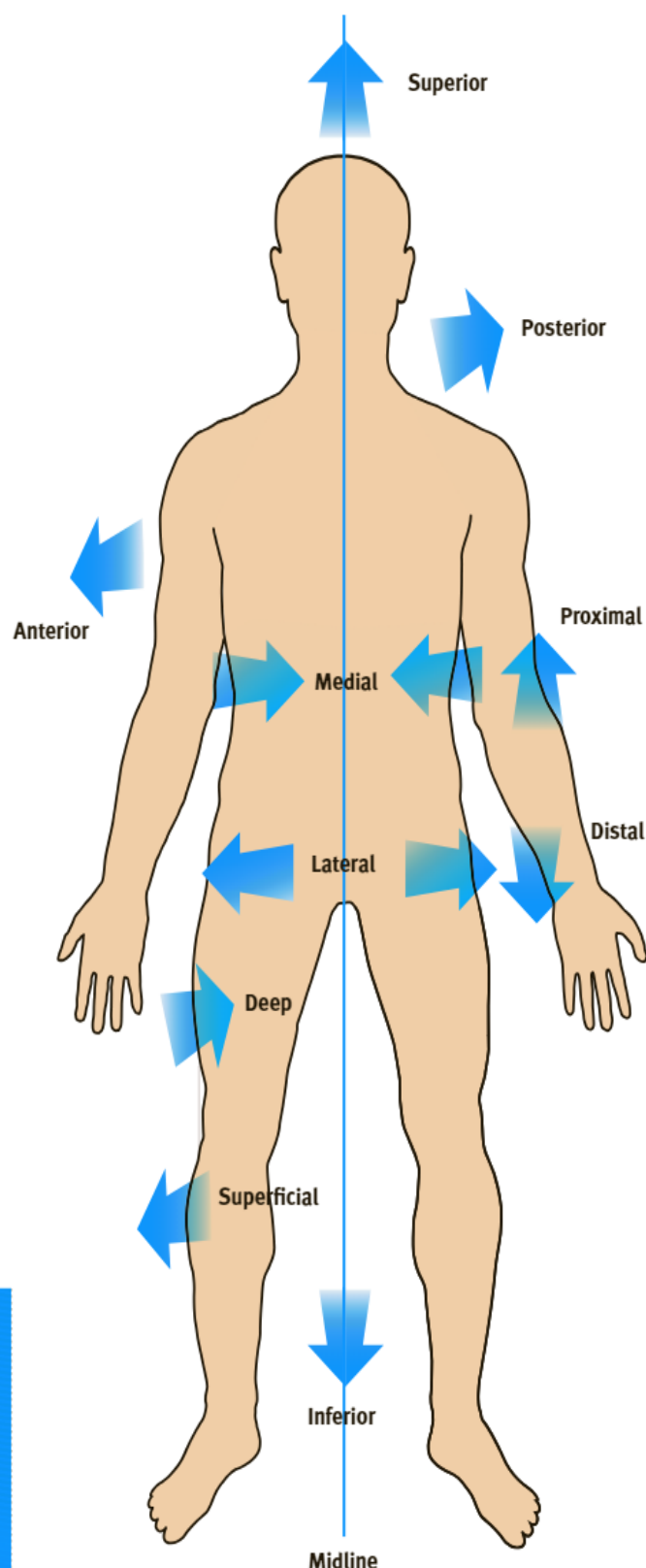


KEY TO ANATOMICAL LANGUAGE

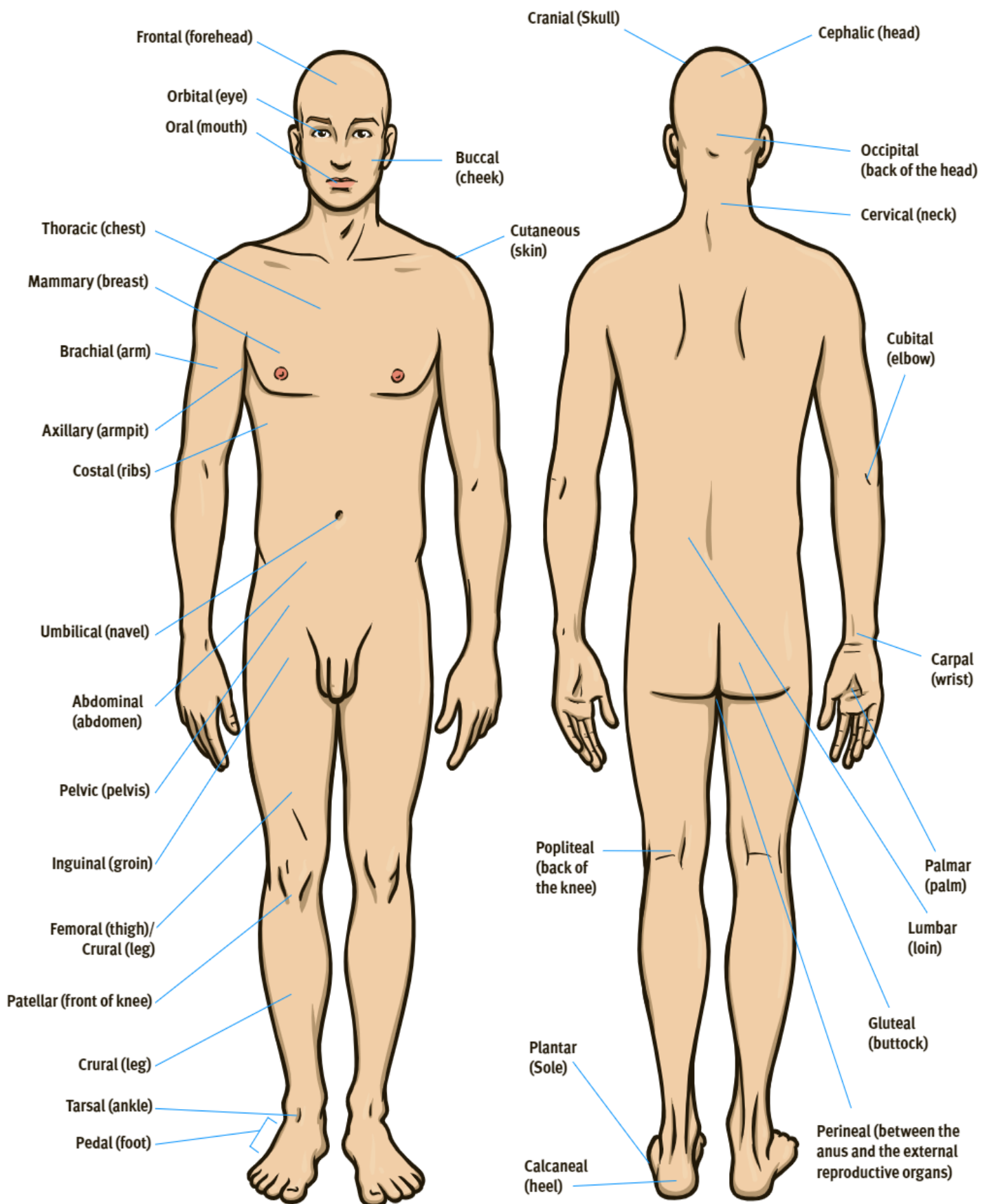


Anatomy means the study of the body's structure. In order to avoid confusion when referring to parts of the body within this structure, it is necessary to have a standardised system of anatomical descriptions and positions. The diagram on the left shows the **directional terms** used in anatomy. Directional terms describe the position of bones, muscles and organs in relation to each other. All of these terms refer to what is known as the standard anatomical position: the body is standing erect, facing the observer, with arms extended and the palms of the hands facing forwards.

- Anterior:** (Also known as **ventral**) Towards the front of the body e.g. the quadriceps are anterior to the hamstrings
- Posterior:** (Also known as **dorsal**) Towards the back of the body e.g. the vertebrae are posterior to the sternum
- Superficial:** Nearer to the surface of the body e.g. the skin is superficial to bone
- Deep:** Further from the surface of the body e.g. transversus abdominus is deep to rectus abdominus
- Proximal:** Nearer to source e.g. the biceps femoris's origin is proximal to its insertion
- Distal:** Further from source e.g. the radius is distal to the humerus
- Inferior:** (Also known as **caudal**) Towards the lower part of the body (away from the head) e.g. the scapula is inferior to the clavicle
- Superior:** (Also known as **cranial**) Towards the upper part of the body (closer to the head) e.g. the tonsils are superior to the thymus gland
- Medial:** Towards the midline e.g. the tibia is medial to the fibula
- Lateral:** Away from the midline e.g. swinging the arm out sideways is moving it laterally
- Midline:** Vertical line through the centre of the body from head to feet

The term **ipsilateral** is used to describe parts or conditions of the body that are located on the same side of the midline. **Contralateral** describes parts or conditions of the body that are located or happening on opposite sides of the midline.

The body is also divided into particular areas called **anatomical regions**. These diagrams show the anatomical regions of the body and the words used to describe them.



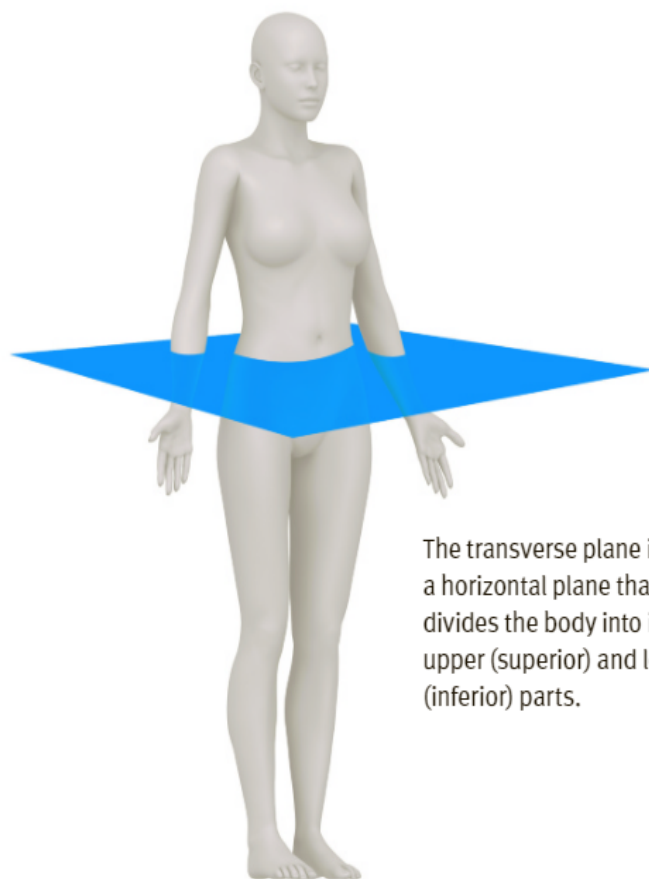
Finally, the body can be divided by straight lines into **planes** and **quadrants**.



The sagittal plane is a vertical plane which divides the body laterally into left and right sides.



The frontal (or coronal) plane divides the body between the front (anterior) and the back (posterior).



The transverse plane is a horizontal plane that divides the body into its upper (superior) and lower (inferior) parts.

The intersection of the sagittal and transverse planes at the navel gives the four **quadrants** of the body.

