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*Common stabilizations of Heegaard splittings.*

A Heegaard splitting is a decomposition of a 3-manifold into two simple pieces called handlebodies. It has long been known that any two Heegaard splittings of the same 3-manifold are related by repeating a construction called stabilization. However, the early proofs of this fact gave no suggestion of how many stabilizations might be needed to turn one Heegaard splitting into another. I will describe a sharp upper bound on the necessary number of stabilizations. (Received January 27, 2011)