

Understanding Body Types

Understanding Body Types – Study Notes

1. Introduction

- **Body type** refers to the overall shape and composition of a person's physique.
- It is influenced by genetics, hormones, lifestyle, and nutrition.
- Knowing body types helps in:
 - Designing personalized fitness programs
 - Setting realistic health and aesthetic goals
 - Understanding potential health risks

2. Classic Classification Systems

System	Main Categories	Key Characteristics	Typical Metabolic Tendencies
Somatotype (Sheldon, 1940s)	Ectomorph	• Thin, long limbs, low body fat	• Fast metabolism, difficulty gaining weight
	Mesomorph	• Muscular, broad shoulders, narrow waist	• Balanced metabolism, easy to build muscle
	Endomorph	• Rounded, softer, higher fat storage	• Slower metabolism, propensity to store fat
Body Shape (Fashion/Health)	Apple (android)	• Upper?body fat dominance (abdomen, chest)	• Higher risk for visceral? fat?related conditions (apple)
	Pear (gynoid)	• Lower?body fat dominance (hips, thighs)	• Lower?body fat tends to be sub?cutaneous (pear)
	Hourglass	• Balanced bust?waist?hip proportions	• Generally balanced risk (hourglass)
	Rectangle	• Similar measurements throughout	• Metabolic profile varies with lifestyle

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System	Main Categories	Key Characteristics	Typical Metabolic Tendencies
BMI?Adjusted Categories	Underweight	Determined by weight?to?height ratio (kg/m ²). Does not capture distribution, but useful for population?level screening.	Direct correlation with cardiovascular, metabolic, and orthopedic risk.
	Normal		
	Overweight		
	Obesity		

Tip: Use more than one system when assessing a client or yourself. Somatotype gives a sense of muscle?vs?fat potential, while body?shape highlights fat distribution.

3. Detailed Look at Each Somatotype

3.1 Ectomorph

- **Physical traits:**
 - Narrow shoulders, small bone structure
 - Long limbs, thin wrists/ankles
 - Low body fat, difficulty gaining weight
- **Metabolic profile:** High basal metabolic rate (BMR)
- **Training focus:**
 - Strength training with moderate volume (3?4?x?week)
 - Compound lifts (squat, deadlift, bench) to stimulate muscle hypertrophy
 - Caloric surplus of +250?500?kcal with protein???1.6?2.2?g/kg body weight
- **Common challenges:**
 - Energy?draining cardio can impede muscle gain
 - Nutrient timing (post?workout carbs) helps replenish glycogen

3.2 Mesomorph

- **Physical traits:**
 - Naturally muscular, broad shoulders, defined waist
 - Medium bone structure, moderate body fat
- **Metabolic profile:** Efficient nutrient utilization; moderate?high BMR

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- **Training focus:**

- Balanced program: strength + hypertrophy + conditioning
- Periodization (e.g., 4?week strength block ? 4?week hypertrophy block)
- Slight caloric surplus for muscle gain or slight deficit for leanness

- **Common challenges:**

- Tendency to plateau; needs regular program variation

3.3 Endomorph

- **Physical traits:**

- Wider hips, larger bone structure