

Why you should know your body type—ectomorph, mesomorph or endomorph

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People differ in terms of physique and other attributes. To a great extent, our genes are either to be blamed or given credit for our looks.



You may not have won the genetic lottery for a perfect physique, but that's no excuse to not have a good semblance of ideal body build, with the right diet and workout.

Simplistically speaking, genes may account for half of our physique and there's nothing much we can do about it.

However, acquired habits and practices, including diet and physical activity, can determine the other half, and these are certainly within our control.

In the January issue of H&L (Health and Lifestyle), noted gastroenterologist and fitness enthusiast Dr. Jun Ruiz of The Medical City collaborated with his fitness-oriented medical colleagues and came up with informative and insightful articles on how middle age and senior individuals can maintain their physical fitness and well-being.

Different body types

First, one must remember that it's "different strokes for different folks." Dr. Ruiz advises everyone to know his or her somatotypes or body types to determine the right workout and appropriate diet, to "come up with the best version of yourself."

Everyone belongs to one of three somatotypes: ectomorph, mesomorph and endomorph.

These body types differ in efficiency in metabolizing calories and nutrients, storing energy, and building muscles.

Dr. Ruiz explains that ectomorphs stay lean despite their voracious appetite; endomorphs struggle to lose weight even if they don't eat much; and mesomorphs pack on muscle easily.

Although some clearly fall in any of these types, many may have a predominant body type but may also have features of other body types. Body types may not come in pure

form, Dr. Ruiz clarifies.

“Knowing your body type will direct the appropriate training and diet that is right for you,” Dr. Ruiz writes. “With proper advice from physicians, nutritionists and personal trainers, we can work on improving our physique and get closer to the body that we aim for.”

He adds though that we should make realistic expectations and goals. He admonishes advertisers promoting gym memberships, diet plans, exercise equipment and supplements who are misleading in their messages, making people expect almost instant transformations.

“Not all men are born to build muscle easily like “Thor” actor Chris Hemsworth or football superstar Cristiano Ronaldo. Not every woman can aspire to be as sexy as Jennifer Lopez,” Dr. Ruiz says.

Knowing one’s body type can make one’s expectations more realistic.

Ectomorphs

Ectomorphs have: •

Lean and long, thin build •

Classic “hard-gainer” build —with difficulty in building muscle •

Narrow hips, clavicles, small joints •

Lower amount of body fat Many marathon runners, basketball players and fashion models are ectomorphs—slim, but short on muscle. Dr. Ruiz cites several famous female ectomorphs like Natalie Portman and Taylor Swift, and famous male ectomorphs like Bradley Cooper, Ryan Gosling and Stephen Curry.

To enhance muscle buildup, workouts of ectomorphs should be short, with emphasis on big muscle groups, and focusing on intense and heavy weightlifting.

The workout must involve compound movements, such as the bench press, deadlift and squat, which exercise more muscle groups.

For nutrition, the best diet for an ectomorph is one that is higher in carbohydrates and calories. The food mix can include 55 to 60 percent of calories coming from carbohydrates, 25 percent from protein, and 20 percent from fat. So, higher carbs and lower fat.

“For those planning to gain muscle, he has to take around 3,000 calories a day, including a lot of starchy carbohydrates,” Dr. Ruiz recommends. “Whey protein supplements may be taken. Best starchy carbohydrates include oats, brown rice, sweet potatoes and potatoes. Protein shakes supplementation can provide the extra boost.”

Mesomorphs

Mesomorphs have: •

Long torso, short limbs •

Broad shoulders, narrow waist •

Strong, athletic build with well-defined muscles •

Gains muscle easily Dr. Ruiz calls mesomorphs the “lucky ones” because they have a naturally athletic physique and are able to put on muscle easily without putting on too much fat.

This can be attributed to their relatively high level of testosterone and growth hormone. Their build is ideal for bodybuilding, and they excel in sports that require power and speed.

“Many athletes, like swimmers, gymnasts and soccer players, are mesomorphs who look well-built, even if they do not routinely work out, and they seem to pack on muscle easily the moment they work out,” Dr. Ruiz says.

Among the famous male mesomorphs are actors Chris Hemsworth, Mark Wahlberg, and soccer superstar Cristiano Ronaldo. Famous female mesomorphs include Madonna and Janet Jackson.

Recommended exercise regimen is 30 to 45 minutes of cardio exercise three to five times a week as part of the exercise routine. For mesomorphs who carry less body, this can be decreased to twice a week.

High-intensity interval training (HIIT) two to three times a week is also recommended by fitness experts, along with one to two sessions of steady-state cardio. HIIT involves alternating short bursts of intense anaerobic activity followed by intervals of lighter activity for recovery.

“The addition of steady-state cardio avoids overtraining and decreases risk of injury,” Dr. Ruiz explains.

Because of their higher ratio of muscle mass, mesomorphs’ daily calorie needs are also slightly higher than the others.

According to British fitness expert Mark Hughes, an ideal diet for mesomorphs would be a macronutrient mix of 40 percent complex carbohydrate, 30 percent lean protein, and 30 percent healthy fats. The average mesomorph needs around 2,500–3,000 calories a day.

Hughes also recommends rich protein sources including eggs (whole or whites), chicken, fish and protein powder. The supplement creatine may also be taken to aid their recovery from athletic workouts.

Endomorphs

Endomorphs have:

- Stocky build and wider body (pear-shaped)
- Large bone structures, with hips wider than clavicles
- Generally softer and rounder build
- Difficulty to lose weight—they put on fat easily

Endomorphs can gain fat easily, even if they don’t eat much. They may have problems with carbohydrate metabolism and insulin sensitivity, and may be predisposed to have

metabolic problems like diabetes and cholesterol issues (high bad cholesterol, and low good cholesterol), and subsequently, heart disease.

They should avoid excessive carbs since this can be quickly converted to sugar in the bloodstream and stored as fat.

The good news, though, is that despite their genetic disadvantage, endomorphs can still succeed in having the physique they want by means of regular exercise and proper diet.

Famous endomorphs who defied the odds in attaining their desired body build include actors Dwayne Johnson, Chris Pratt, Jennifer Lopez and Beyonce.

Recommended exercise regimen includes intense aerobic exercise, focusing on interval-based conditioning, like HIIT, rather than low-intensity steady state cardio.

For conditioning, they can still include cardio exercises three to five days a week for 30 minutes, but experts recommend cardio training that are low-impact and easy on the Fitness regimen and diet must depend on it

knees, like swimming, biking, hiking, and elliptical machine.

“It is important that they train their overall body to see results and not just focus on one area,” Dr. Ruiz advises. “Spotreducing fat exercises, like abdominal crunches, do not usually work if you are generally overweight.”

For diet mix, nutrition experts recommend 30 percent carbs, 35 percent protein and 35 percent fat. Carbohydrates must be limited to prevent onset of or control diabetes.

Carbs can be obtained from vegetables. Carb-dense foods like white bread, rice, cookies and carb-loaded sports drinks must be avoided. Protein and fiber intake must be increased.

Wishing for the best “you” this year.