

What Body Type Are You?

It is a common complaint that people are not satisfied with the way that they look. One only has to observe the many different diets, exercise videos, medical procedures, and cosmetic surgeries people are using and undergoing to understand the extent of this dissatisfaction. A big problem is that many do not understand the concept that there are different body types; and these different body types have their advantages and disadvantages, depending on what the person would like to be able to do and how they would like to look.

On hearing many complaints, it sometimes becomes apparent the person did not pick the right parents to be born to as they are not happy with their genetic traits. This article's goal is to present the basic body types, look at the benefits and/or drawbacks of each type, and perhaps to get people to have a better understanding of why they have the shape and characteristics that they possess. With that knowledge, hopefully, they will learn to make the most of their situation and learn to like and eventually come to love themselves.

There are 3 classic body types, called **somatotypes**, that have been described over the years in scientific literature. Interestingly, these different types also are noted as Vata, Pitta, and Kapha in Ayurveda, which is a system of traditional medicine originating in India. Most of the time, people are combinations of these different types with certain predominating characteristics or tendencies. However, occasionally there are people that are classic examples of a particular type. The following will review these basic types and you can decide which you tend to favor.

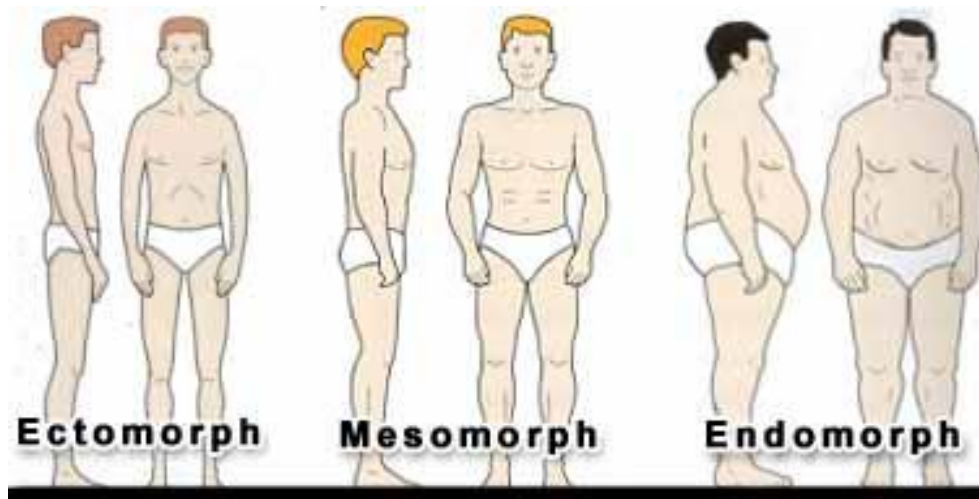
The 3 Classic Body Types

Ectomorphs (Vata) – people with this body type tend to be small framed, and relatively thin with low body fat. Elite marathon runners or ballerinas would be a classic example of someone with this body type.

Mesomorphs (Pitta) – people with this body type tend to be medium framed and have the capacity for having a classic bodybuilder type physique. Often sprinters and other powerfully built, muscular and lean athletes have this body type.

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Endomorphs (Kapha) – people with this body type tend to be large framed and carry more mass, both muscle and fat, than the others. World class strength athletes, think worlds-strongest-man type individuals, tend to possess this body type.



A reason it is important to recognize different somatotypes is that each has characteristics that will allow potential success or failure in given pursuits. Of course the body frame is not the only component that allows someone success or failure in a given endeavor, and many of these other factors will be addressed in other articles.

The person with ectomorphic traits will tend to function best if they remain lean, probably less than 8-10% body fat for men, and 12-15% body fat for women. They will do well to train and compete in endurance events like triathlons (running, cycling, swimming) and utilize mild strength activities as this goes with their natural constitution. Ectomorphic trait people often have difficulty when they want to be a competitive powerlifter, bodybuilder, or compete in impact sports with larger individuals. Of course there are always notable exceptions, but these pursuits are often met with disappointment because they are not best suited to this body type.

The person with mesomorphic traits will tend to function best if they remain lean, probably maintaining between 10-15% body fat for men, and 15-20% body for women. They tend to do particularly well and excel in sports involving sprints up

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to middle distances (running, cycling, rowing, swimming), bodybuilding, and impact sports. People with mesomorphic traits tend to do well in most of the common sports that the majority of people participate in and are often considered by those observing as being “natural athletes”. Mesomorphic trait people often have difficulty if they force themselves to become excessively lean or if they allow themselves to gain too much body fat.

The person with endomorphic traits will tend to function best if they remain lean for their frame, probably maintaining between 15-20% body fat for men, and 20-25% body fat for women. They tend to excel at endeavors involving strength and size, impact sports, or in unusual activities such as cold-water swimming. They often have difficulty in sports that require a certain amount of leanness and aesthetics such as body building, or in those activities that require weight bearing endurance such as in running. One of the common problems that occur with those people with endomorphic tendencies is that they often do not regularly participate in physical conditioning activities and as a result, decondition. This lack of activity tends to cause them to put on significant amounts of body fat while losing muscle mass. These people more frequently end up suffering from obesity and obesity-related problems such as diabetes and arthritis than their ectomorphic and mesomorphic counterparts.

Having or favoring one of these body-types simply means that we have to be aware of our tendencies, our inherent strengths and weaknesses, and plan our goals and lifestyle accordingly to maximize our potential.