

Bodybuilding the natural way

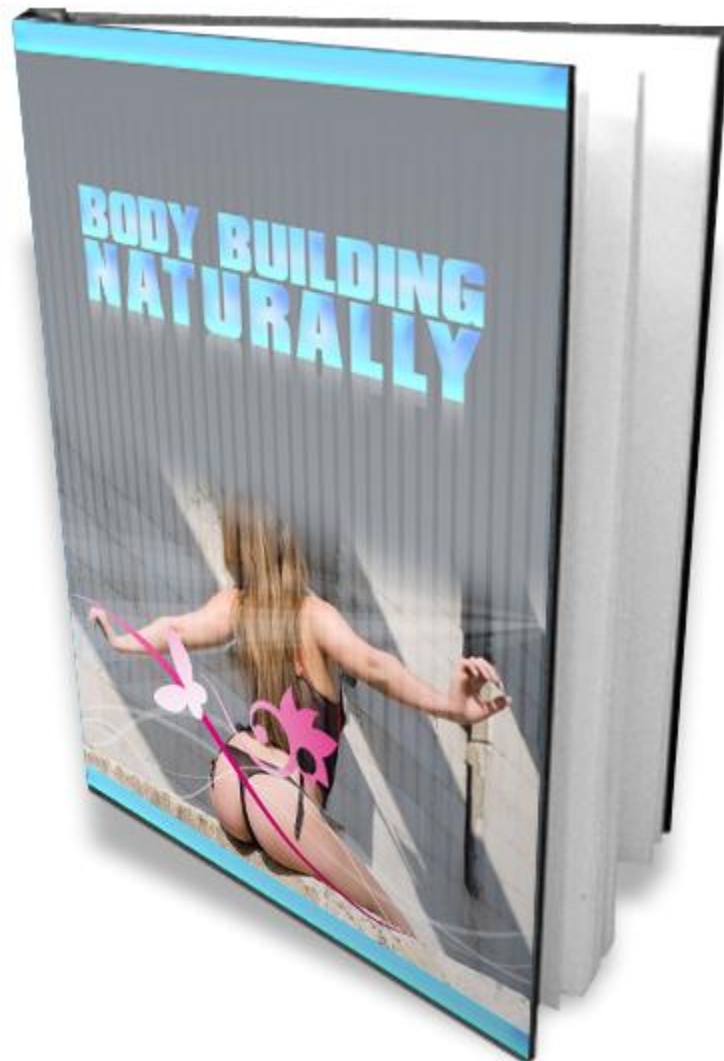


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Introduction

While for many people who are not into bodybuilding, the whole idea is probably something of a mystery, there are millions of individuals all over the world for whom bodybuilding is a major part of their lives.

The best place to start this investigation of natural bodybuilding is to define what bodybuilding is. According to the [Wikipedia definition of bodybuilding](#), it is:

'the process of maximizing muscle hypertrophy; an individual who engages in this process is referred to as a bodybuilder'.

Muscle hypertrophy is a scientific term that is used to refer to the growth and increase in size of existing muscle cells, as opposed to the formation of new muscle cells.

In short, bodybuilding is the process of adding extra muscle mass to the body by extensive working out and control of diet. It is something that is done either for personal achievement, recreation or as a competitive 'sport'.

However, one of the first areas of dispute between those who practice bodybuilding and those who are less enamored of it concerns whether bodybuilding is a genuine sport or not. The contention that it is not a sport is based on the fact that there is no athletic activity involved, as the whole basis of judging bodybuilding competitions is the appearance and aesthetics of the contestants.

It is for this reason that despite many attempts to have bodybuilding included in the Olympics, these attempts have been continually rebuffed, and will probably be similarly dismissed in the future. As suggested, there is no athletic activity involved in body building, so it is not to be confused with strongman contests or weightlifting competitions.

When competitive bodybuilders appear in contests, they adopt certain poses that are designed to accentuate certain muscle groups in the body. The effectiveness of the poses being adopted is a significant factor in deciding which bodybuilders win competitions, so it is believed that many top bodybuilders spend up to half their training time perfecting these poses.

There are many techniques adopted for gaining muscle mass, with the chosen strategy to some extent depending upon whether the individual concerned is bodybuilding for personal satisfaction or for competition purposes.

There are individuals who can work on gaining muscle mass slowly and steadily, people who can continue to do so almost without any apparent limitations.

In contrast, there are many individuals who very quickly reach a limit beyond which they cannot gain any further muscle mass because they do not have any particular natural qualities that enable them to 'bulk up' quickly.

Individuals who fall into the latter category are often termed '[hardgainers](#)' because they find it very hard to gain any further muscle mass after they reach a certain level. There are many reasons why this happens to some people and not others, many of which will be reviewed in this report.

People who reach a plateau in this way apart, the most common technique adopted by bodybuilders is to do whatever is necessary to acquire as much additional muscle mass as possible until an acceptable threshold has been reached (in the case of a recreational bodybuilder) or until a major competition is imminent for the competitive bodybuilder.

After this, the individual concerned will then spend some time working on accentuating muscle definition rather than adding any extra mass.

A very brief history of bodybuilding

In the West, it is believed that bodybuilding first came to prominence between 1880 and 1930, when it was promoted by the man who is now often dubbed 'The Father of Modern Bodybuilding', [Eugen Sandow](#).

Indeed, it was Sandow who organized what is generally accepted to be the first ever bodybuilding competition, which he (with commendable understatement) called 'The Great Competition'. This took place at the Royal Albert Hall in London on September 14, 1901, with one of the judges being Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the writer of the world-famous Sherlock Holmes novels.

Although Sandow did not win the competition, the man who did was presented with a bronze statue of Sandow as his first prize, which is interestingly still given out to the winner of the most prestigious professional bodybuilding competition, [Mr. Olympia](#) to this day.

From the 1970s onwards, professional bodybuilding began to be far more organized than previously, with many new organizations such as the [International Federation of Bodybuilders](#) (IFBB), and later the [National Physique Committee](#), which according to many is the most successful professional bodybuilding organization in the USA and also acts as the amateur division of the IFBB.

Clouds on the horizon...

It was also around about the same time that performance enhancing drugs started to become a problem in many sports, and bodybuilding was no exception to this. Back in the 70s, the main drug problem was caused by the use of [anabolic steroids](#) by participants in many sports, a problem that was widely discussed and analyzed, because at that time, anabolic steroids were not an illegal substance.

It was probably no coincidence that performance enhancing drugs in bodybuilding started to come to prominence at a time when bodybuilding first began to be recognized as a competitive activity.

Nowadays, anabolic steroids are illegal in most Western countries except when taken under medical supervision. In addition, the list of banned substances is a great deal longer and more detailed than it was back in the 70s, certainly in international sport.

Natural bodybuilding is the very antithesis of building your muscles up using drugs or banned substances, to the extent that 'Natural bodybuilding' means 'bodybuilding without the use of illegal performance enhancing drugs' according to [Wikipedia](#).

One thing to understand about the banned substances that have become a plague on international sport and competition over the past 40 years or so is that most performance enhancers do not really help to enhance performance.

They allow anyone who is training to train harder for a longer period and to recover more quickly. Consequently, by using performance enhancing drugs, it is possible to build up muscle, stamina and fitness far more quickly than if the individual concerned was not abusing these substances.

To anyone who is interested in or is a proponent of natural bodybuilding, the use of artificial substances to help any individual taking part in competition to perform to a higher level than they might otherwise be able to achieve is an anathema.

Natural bodybuilding fights back...

For this reason, over the past few years, many new natural bodybuilding organizations have been established with the sole purpose of promoting the idea of adding the muscle mass that is necessary for competitive bodybuilding in a totally natural way.

Rather than have an official website of their own, many of these diverse natural bodybuilding organizations have joined together under the one [International Natural Bodybuilders Association](#) (but a word of warning –

turn your speakers off if you don't want to be deafened by the 'music' that starts playing at deafening volume as soon as you arrive on the homepage!).

On the site, there is a comprehensive list of all substances that are banned in all forms of competition by the [World Anti-Doping Agency](#). Click the link to see the list of substances that are banned as of the 1st of January 2009 in all forms of recognized competition in all sports and activities.

At a competitive or professional level it is therefore clear that banned substances of any form are no longer acceptable in bodybuilding, any more than they are in any kind of recognized sporting activities.

However, the number of people who are professional bodybuilders in comparison to the number of people who are bodybuilders for their own personal enjoyment and satisfaction is extremely small.

Nevertheless, it is not unknown for even the most seemingly laid-back recreational participant in all forms of sport or physical activity to be utterly determined to succeed, and determination of this nature often leads to a temptation to take short cuts.

This is possibly one of the reasons why over the past two or three decades, bodybuilding has (however erroneously) become almost synonymous with participants indulging in banned substances in a desperate effort to attain another 0.1% performance or appearance improvement.

Organizations that actively promote natural bodybuilding like INBA are doing everything they can to banish this impression, but it is often notoriously difficult to change perceptions, and it is slow even if you are successful in doing so.

The bottom line is, while substances that appear on the WADA banned list are there because they enable participants to improve their performance, you should not underestimate the harm and damage that many of these substances can do, particularly if you decide to use them for a period of time.

For example, going back to the favorite performance enhancing drugs of the 1970s, anabolic steroids have a long list of adverse side-effects attached to them. They increase the risk of cardiovascular disease, coronary artery disease, high (bad) cholesterol levels, high blood pressure and can cause irreparable liver damage.

This is all in addition to other physical problems such as the ability of anabolic steroids to bring on premature baldness in men and to make even women bald (as well as encouraging beard growth in women).

Then there are suspected psychological side-effects such as depression (sometimes leading to suicide), heightened aggression, and a raised risk of developing an addictive personality.

Even some of the natural hormones that are on the WADA banned substances list can have the side-effects, so while it might be assumed that consuming natural hormones will be safe, this is a very general and possibly misguided assumption to make.

For example, Corticotrophins are on the banned WADA list, just one natural hormone selected at random. According to [Wikipedia](#), these are hormones these are produced by the anterior pituitary gland, often in response to stress.

However, they have also been shown to cause mild side-effects such as loss of appetite, worsened acne and diarrhea, as well as far more serious potential side-effects such as severe allergic reactions, muscle pain and weakness, swollen mouth, lips and tongue, and even seizures.

In short, while they may be natural, there are certain levels of human hormones that are 'right' for your body, and 'dosing up' with more significant amounts of a hormone could be potentially dangerous, no matter how natural it might be.

While there is no doubt that the main focus of the WADA list is on prohibiting drugs or substances that enhance performance, it is an inescapable fact that many of these substances can also cause a great deal of harm.

For this reason, it cannot be over emphasized how important it is that no matter how desperate you are to become successful bodybuilder, you do not succumb to the temptation to take performance enhancing substances under any circumstances.

Doing so might at best be unpleasant but there is also a very significant risk that, especially over the long term, ingesting such substances could be very dangerous indeed.

The human frame and how it relates to bodybuilding

As previously suggested, the basic concept of bodybuilding is that bodybuilders (whether professional or amateur) increase their muscle mass while reducing fat levels with the basic objective of looking strong, athletic and generally well muscled.

In order to achieve their objectives, it is therefore necessary for a bodybuilder to work on developing their musculature. In short, all bodybuilders bulk up their muscle mass until they either start winning the competitions that they enter or until they 'look the way they have always wanted to look'.

However, there is one cloud on this theoretical horizon, which is the fact that no bodybuilder starts with an empty canvas on which they can paint. On the contrary, every bodybuilder starts with the body they have already got, and there is some evidence that the body type and shape that you start with will to an extent dictate how successful you are as a bodybuilder in the future.

To some degree, your success as a bodybuilder is partially genetic, because like any artist or artisan, you can only work with the raw materials you have been given.

There are various genetic factors at work which will to a degree dictate how good a bodybuilder you might become. Let's start to consider some of these factors.

Three body types...

Back in the 1940's, an American numismatist and psychologist [Dr William H. Sheldon](#) propounded the theory that there are essentially three different types of body shape that could cover all men.

As a result of his studies, Sheldon classified all human physiques into one of three categories, which he deemed to be mesomorphs, endomorphs and ectomorphs.

Of the three classifications, the 'kindest' by far, the one that everyone would probably like to be is the mesomorph, which is representative of an individual who has a classic, naturally athletic build. Such an individual would generally be characterized by broad shoulders, a strong back and a large chest. They would be muscular and lean, with above average natural strength.

In other words, a person who could be characterized as a mesomorph is an ideal candidate to be a successful bodybuilder.

An endomorph is a person who is naturally heavy, often someone who has a natural tendency to be fat. An endomorph will often be characterized by a soft, more rounded body shape, a round face and wider hips. It is also quite common for people who are endomorphs to have a naturally heavy bone structure, so it is easy for them to gain weight while difficult to maintain physical fitness.

The ectomorph character is someone who is naturally skinny, with long, thin arms, a slight bone structure, narrow chest and a limited amount of natural body fat.

From the description of the three different types of human physiques that Sheldon recognized, it is going to be easiest for someone who is a mesomorph to become a successful bodybuilder.

However, one thing that has become increasingly clear since Sheldon's original classifications were established is that not everyone fits neatly into one body category or the other. Indeed, some extremely well-known and highly successful amateur and professional competition bodybuilders have exhibited characteristics of more than one classification.

For example, the very first Mr. Olympia [Larry Scott](#) was not a particularly metamorphic individual, being noticeably skinny (ectomorphic) before he started training to be a bodybuilder. However, by the time he won Mr. Olympia, there is no way that you could suggest that [he was skinny](#), so his body had the ability to 'bulk up'. Larry Scott was an ecto-mesomorph from the beginning, someone who did not fit nicely into one of the Sheldon classifications.

At the other end of the scale, other well-known professional bodybuilders like [Danny Padilla](#) were fairly heavily built to start with, and had no problems whatsoever putting on the bulk that they needed to be successful bodybuilders. However, he is believed to have had problems getting lean enough to win competitions, so is forced to follow an extremely rigid diet in order to achieve what he eventually went on to achieve in professional bodybuilding.

In this situation, you could say these individuals were endo-mesomorphs rather than being classic mesomorphs of the type who generally make the best or most natural bodybuilders.

To a certain extent therefore, the type of body you have will have some influence on your body building success. However, even if you are not the perfect mesomorph of the Sheldon classification, it does not follow that bodybuilding is not for you. Whether you could achieve professional status is another question, but I am assuming that you don't want to

anyway. At a recreational or personal enjoyment level, bodybuilding is something that almost anyone can do.

There is also another consideration to take into account, which is that other people's perception of us as individuals often affects our attitude to our own body.

For example, if coming to the end of your teens, getting ready to leave home for the first-time, you are the kind of person who has always carried a little weight because Mom's home cooking was just so good, you will probably consider yourself to be just an average guy or girl.

If however everyone starts telling you that you are endomorphic, it is likely that you are eventually going to start pay more attention to other people's opinion of your body type than you do to your own opinions. It then becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, because if you enjoy your food and you know that you are a naturally fat person (because you've been told this so often), why would you make an effort to change things?

While there is probably nothing intrinsically physiological that prevents you from becoming a successful bodybuilder, psychologically you have already accepted that bodybuilding (and probably every other kind of sport as well) is not for you.

So, while your natural body shape or physique will have some bearing on how successful you are likely to be as a bodybuilder, it is not the be-all-and-end-all. As indicated previously, many highly successful professional bodybuilders were not 'the right shape' by nature, but by dint of hard work and dedication, they became amongst the best in the business.

Perhaps it is fairer to suggest that while their body shape might not have been ideal for becoming bodybuilders, they had metamorphic characteristics somewhere in their makeup that enabled them to become successful in their chosen field. Whether these characteristics were strictly physical or partially physical and partially psychological, it is impossible to say, but if they had these characteristics, there is no reason whatsoever why you may not have them as well.

Where do 'hardgainers' fit into this picture?

The popular perception of a hardgainer is of an individual who can work out regularly with weights for weeks on end and hardly see any improvement in muscle mass other than a slight increase in muscle tone quality.

The classic hardgainer is also most commonly the classic ectomorph, the kind of person that can eat almost anything they want and never put on an ounce of extra weight until they reach the later years of their

life when the hormones that control their bodily shape and development are less in control than they were in earlier years.

As previously suggested, being naturally ectomorphic does not necessarily mean that you cannot achieve success as a bodybuilder. However, it does mean that you need to approach your bodybuilding development program somewhat differently from the way the classic mesomorph might approach building up their muscle mass.

'How will I look?'

For anyone who is considering taking up bodybuilding, this is probably one of the first questions that you are likely to ask yourself. While there can never be a definitive answer to this question because to a large extent, the final 'you' will be a result of the amount of work you are prepared to put in, there are many physical characteristics that could have some influence on your final success levels and physical shape.

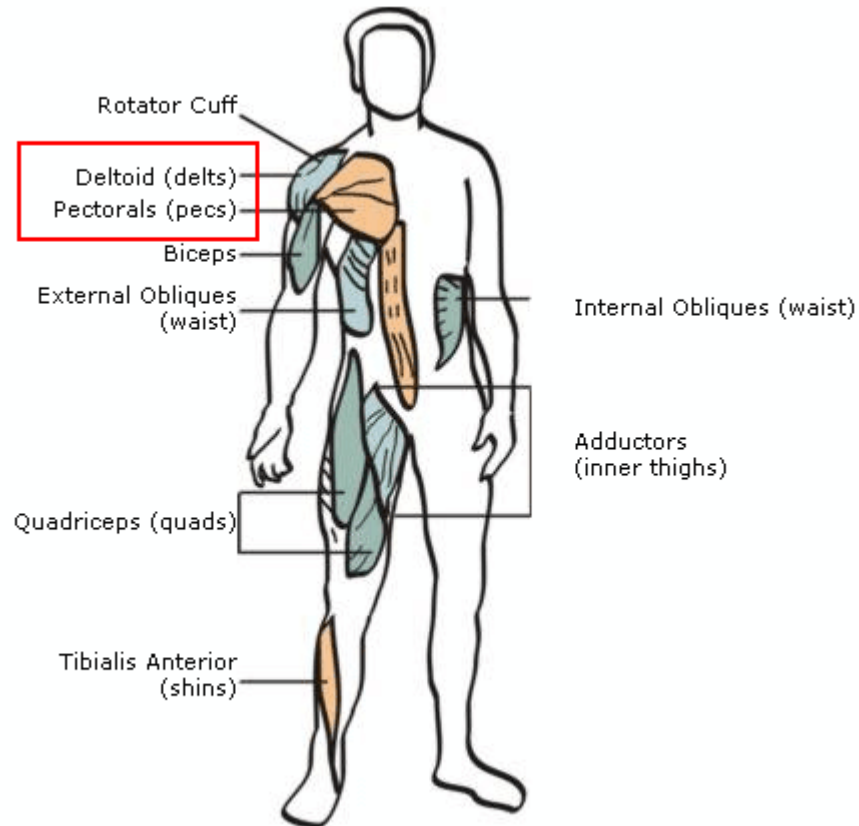
For example, your body type as already discussed is relevant.

However, to take this analysis one stage further, it is the different components of your body that make up your complete shape, so each of these different parts needs to be considered in isolation to establish how likely it is that you can become a successful bodybuilder.

For instance, your bone structure is extremely important, with the ideal for bodybuilding being wide shoulders and a narrow waist and hips. However, despite the fact that the majority of the most famous bodybuilders do conform to these criteria, not every bodybuilder had naturally wide shoulders and narrow hips.

If you want to become a successful bodybuilder and you do not have the perfect bone structure, it simply means that you have to focus your muscle building activities on developing your body in such a way that it *appears* that you have ideal bone structure.

For example, by concentrating on adding inches of extra muscle mass to his deltoid and pectoral muscles while keeping his waist as lean as possible:



[Larry Scott](#) was able to create an illusion of the classic V shape torso that is characteristic of successful bodybuilders.

The size and density of your bones is also extremely important for anyone who wants to become a successful bodybuilder, because while strong, heavy bones are a major advantage in full body contact sports like rugby and football, they are not going to be advantageous when your success or failure as a bodybuilder is judged on the way you look.

The opposite is also true. If your skeletal frame is too light and perhaps a little weak, it could limit on the amount of muscle mass you can carry on your frame as well as the amount of weight you can lift in the gym.

Other individual characteristics of bone structure are also important if you want to achieve the perfect bodybuilder pose and look. As an example, a big rib cage as exemplified by [Arnold Schwarzenegger](#) is a huge advantage for a bodybuilder, because it naturally creates potential for a bigger chest and greater upper back muscle development.

In a similar manner, the length of your bones makes a difference to the final shape you can achieve, and there is absolutely nothing you can do to change the shape of your bones, so it is a question of working with what you have.

For instance, long legs suggest an ectomorphic body area, so they may be more difficult to develop, but long legged bodybuilders naturally look taller.

Then you have the muscles which are the 'building bricks' around which all of your bodybuilding development work will be centered. Many people do not understand that natural muscle shape is a characteristic unique to every individual with the shape itself been dictated by how far the muscle is naturally stretched.

If you have muscles that are attached to the bone at each end quite closely together, you are likely to have fairly compressed muscles which form a noticeable peak when the muscle is tensed. Such big muscles are a big advantage in competitive bodybuilding, which is one of the reasons that Schwarzenegger was so successful (take a look at his biceps to see what I mean).

Others have muscles that are attached much further down the bone, with the attached ends being further apart. In this case, the muscle will demonstrate a considerably smoother, more flowing image, rather than appearing to reach a peak. Again, compare biceps between Schwarzenegger and Larry Scott to see a couple of very good examples of the differences.

What does all this mean to you?

After reading through this chapter, the main thing that you have to take away is that while every individual who decides to become a bodybuilder enters the fray with different 'raw materials', it does not automatically follow that your body shape or bone structure limits what you can do.

However, it is going to be helpful if you can analyze the kind of person you are before starting your bodybuilding training, because knowing what your raw materials are should enable you to approach bodybuilding far more practically. While it is probably not realistic to expect you to understand all of the fine-detail niceties of whether your bone structure is perfect for bodybuilding or not, or whether your muscle attachment points are suitable, you should be able to come up with a general idea of the kind of person you are before embarking on bodybuilding training.

The importance of this is that bodybuilding success ultimately depends on three factors - your general lifestyle, the training program you adopt and proper nutrition.

As we progress through this book, we will look at all of these different aspects of how to become a successful bodybuilder, but only you can

know what raw materials you are starting with before you begin doing whatever is necessary to become a bodybuilding success.

Lifestyle considerations

To a degree, everything you do in your efforts to increase muscle mass is a lifestyle decision. However, in this section of the report, I am not going to refer to the hours that you have to find to be able to train in order to become a bodybuilder or even the lifestyle impacts of changing your diet to one that is more conducive to building muscle mass.

Instead, this section of the report will focus on other aspects of your life where you can make changes that will help you to become a better, more successful bodybuilder completely naturally.

Remember as you read through this chapter that the primary objective of anyone who is attempting to become a successful bodybuilder is to develop existing muscles by adding mass while also reducing the percentage of body fat you carry around with you. Anything that acts in the opposite manner to either of these pre-requisites is going to damage your attempts to be a serious natural bodybuilder.

Stress and bodybuilding

[Cortisol](#) is a hormone that is produced by the adrenal cortex, which is part of the adrenal gland. It is a hormone that is often referred to as the 'stress' hormone which increases both blood sugar levels and pressure, while also reducing the effectiveness of your immune system.

Perhaps the most important thing about cortisol is that it has been indicated that when it is produced in excess amounts (i.e. in response to increased stress or tension levels), it can reduce muscle mass while aiding the deposit of additional body fat.

From this observation, it naturally follows that if you are trying to become a more successful bodybuilder, you need to reduce cortisol levels if at all possible.

The first thing that you can do in an attempt to reduce cortisol is to reduce the stress that is present in your everyday life.

For example, try to teach yourself [time management skills](#) and how to keep every day, whether working or at leisure, completely under control.

Instead of leaving everything to the last minute so it becomes a panic filled rush, plan everything you do every day well ahead of time. In addition, give yourself plenty of time to make sure that you achieve everything you want to achieve, because there is nothing more likely to cause stress and tension than either having to leave a job uncompleted or having to finish it in a mad rush in order to get everything done.

Consider learning additional skills that will help to keep your stress levels under control such as [yoga](#), [meditation](#) and how to [breathe properly](#), as an aid to keeping self-control. All of these practices will greatly assist you in reducing the stress levels that you currently feel every day and as a result, the level of cortisol circulating in your body will naturally decrease.

Another thing that can help to reduce stress and therefore the levels of cortisol that your adrenal cortex is producing is to make sure that you get enough sleep. Most experts recommend that a healthy, restorative good night's sleep is made up of 8 hours and 15 minutes of solid rest.

However, while you are trying to reduce the stress levels in your life, it is often not possible to make everything perfect, simply because there are not enough hours in the day for each of us to pack in everything that we want to do. Hence, if 8 hours and 15 minutes of sound sleep is not possible, you should aim for at least 7 hours of total rest every night, and make up the rest either with a late afternoon nap or at the weekend.

This is important, because it is scientifically proven that a lack of sleep greatly increases the production of cortisol, which will significantly hinder the effectiveness of your bodybuilding efforts and add fat to your torso at the same time.

Happiness and balance is an important factor in your bodybuilding success as well. This is because bodybuilding is a 24 hour activity, something that you cannot pick up and put down as you see fit. It requires a certain degree of dedication and a lot of determination, but living a balanced life is important too because doing things away from the gym that you enjoy doing makes it easier to put up with the training when it is hard.

Balance, exercise and banishing harmful habits

While your efforts to become a successful natural bodybuilder will necessitate following a program of training that is specifically designed to build muscle mass, it is important to appreciate that living a generally healthy lifestyle is a central part of achieving balance and happiness as well.

So, while weights and the like are an essential part of your bodybuilding efforts, lifting weights is an anaerobic sport, an activity that does not give your heart and lungs a workout.

Consequently, you should also consider practicing aerobic sports like swimming or cycling, and if you can find something that you really enjoy doing at the same time, so much the better. Taking up something like swimming will greatly increase your endurance and stamina, and if

you enjoy it as well, it inevitably makes the necessary hard work in the gym seem that much easier to bear.

The bottom line is that becoming a successful natural bodybuilder is not something that is going to happen overnight, and there will be times when your progress might seem slower than you would like it to be.

It is at times like these, when having other things in your life, things that you can turn to for enjoyment that are nevertheless good for you, will sometimes be the escape valve that you need. Without this escape valve, you come back to the fact that you will be stressed, you will be tense and you already know how this can adversely affect your efforts.

This is not to suggest that everything you do should relate to exercise. Indeed, your life should definitely not only be focused on exercise, because rest is an essential part of being a successful bodybuilder.

There is also a school of thought that maintains that too much aerobic or cardiovascular exercise can increase the production of cortisol, so it is essential that you keep your cardiovascular exercise in the 'fat burning zone'.

This is one reason why, for a non-competitive bodybuilder, the best time to undertake aerobic exercise is immediately after a weights session.

By doing so, you ensure that the excess glycogen in your body (the first source of energy that your body turns to before it starts to burn the fat) has been exhausted by your weight training before you start exercising. Therefore, as soon as you start aerobic exercise, you are straight into the 'fat burning zone' the minute you start.

Remembering that there is a counterbalance between the importance of burning fat and accumulating muscle mass, this ability to start burning fat immediately after a weights session is an excellent way of keeping your body fat percentage to a minimum.

As an approximate formula by which you calculate the point at which you enter the 'fat burning zone', use this formula:

$$\text{FBZ} = 220 - (\text{your age}) \times 0.75$$

This will give you an approximate idea of how many heartbeats a minute you need to experience in order to start burning fat. Once you are in this 'zone', the average male should aim for 5 or 6 aerobic exercise sessions a week for 30 minutes a time, whereas females should be looking at 20-30 minutes the same number of times every week.

Stick to these limits, and the risk of getting into a situation where you amplify cortisol production is very limited.

There must be times when you get away from all forms of training and exercise to make an effort to relax. But when you do so, try not to succumb to bad practices that might actually damage your bodybuilding efforts.

For example, while having the occasional beer is not going to damage the chances of your being a successful bodybuilder very much, smoking 20 cigarettes a day is certainly going to make it an awful lot harder to achieve the physique that you want to achieve.

Filling your lungs with tar and nicotine filled smoke every day is likely to reduce your ability to recover from serious training sessions, meaning that you will automatically be able to train less frequently and probably with less intensity as well. Your progress to bodybuilding success will naturally be slowed if you are a heavy smoker.

One of the greatest personal characteristics that you will learn or have enhanced by becoming a natural bodybuilder is that of personal discipline, which is a prerequisite for taking a life changing decision like quitting the evil weed!

Remember to apply determination and discipline to everything in your life, and set goals in everything you do as a way of achieving and then maintaining the balance that you must have to be successful.

Getting the body that you want is going to take a lot of hard work and effort, so only a naïve fool would believe that it's going to be easy to achieve your goals. However, once you do get to where you want to be in bodybuilding terms, you can live what you might call the 'bodybuilder lifestyle' in the same way as thousands of other successful bodybuilders.

Nevertheless, do not ever allow yourself to lose sight of the fact that the lifestyle is not your whole life. You need balance, you need outside interests away from the gym, and above all else, you have to adapt an all-round lifestyle that is conducive to achieving bodybuilding success.

Diet and nutrition for maximum bodybuilding success

At the heart of natural bodybuilding, the two main things that really count are the amount of effort that you put into your training, and nutrition.

Now, the word 'diet' is often used as a dirty word, especially by people who are trained to lose weight and associate the word with starvation and being deprived of all the things that they most enjoy eating. While adopting a particular diet for bodybuilding purposes is not about starving or even denying yourself your favorite foodstuffs, there is a similar amount of discipline required as would be necessary if you were trying to lose weight.

Let us start by looking at the basics of nutrition for anyone who wants to start bodybuilding, or is interested in doing so more effectively.

Bodybuilding nutrition basics...

More is better: One of the first things that you have to do if you are going to adopt a diet regime that is designed to increase muscle mass is to move away from the traditional three meals a day scenario. Instead, you need to eat perhaps five smaller meals a day, with considerably less time in between eating times.

The reason that you do this is that under normal circumstances, your body will assume that there is no more food coming if you don't feed it for more than three or four hours.

Consequently, in this catabolic state, your body will immediately start to feed on lean muscle (leaving your body fat untouched) on the basis that this body fat is high in calories and therefore represents an excellent source of long-term energy if there is no more food coming for a longer period.

This is completely contrary to what you want as a bodybuilder, so you must eat several smaller meals a day, with no more than 2½ or 3 hours between each one.

Balance is the key: As you will discover later in this chapter, when people decide that they want to become bodybuilders, they do not each do so for the same reasons. For example, some people may need to pay more attention to losing fat before starting to build real muscle mass, while others who have already got themselves to a position where their body fat levels are very low will be the opposite, wanting to focus on muscle building right from the very beginning.

Hence, there is an element of your diet having to be focused on whatever it is you specifically want to achieve at this time.

As a general rule, every meal that you take should be balanced between the three micronutrients that every bodybuilder needs, which are proteins, carbohydrates and good fats, with each being taken in the right proportions.

What you should not do is have meals where everything or almost everything you eat falls into the same micronutrient category.

For example, a meal that is made up of little other than carbohydrates (e.g. a bowl of pasta and plain bread with a sliver of spread) is not likely to be a great help to your body building diet, because every meal should attain the balance that you need to achieve your objectives.

As a broad guideline, most body building experts recommend a diet that is 40% carbohydrate, 40% protein and 20% good fats. But the most important thing is, try to make sure that whatever balance you are aiming for, every meal is approximately the same.

Why the glycemic index is important: The [glycemic index](#) (GI) is a measure of how quickly your blood sugar levels rise after ingesting a carbohydrate, which always happens because as soon as you take in carbohydrates, it gets turned into glucose. In turn, glucose makes ATP, which is a natural substance that 'drives' everything your body does.

According to the glycemic index, every foodstuff or beverage you ingest is assigned a value, which indicates how quickly sugar is released into your blood after taking that food or drink.

Some substances would act very quickly to increase blood sugar level, if for example you drank a pure sugar drink. Hence, this drink would have a high glycemic index near the upper limit of 100, whereas [whole wheat spaghetti](#) has a GI figure of somewhere between 35 and 40.

Given that carbohydrates generate energy for your body, you might assume that the higher the GI figure is for particular foodstuff, the better it will be for anyone who is trying to power their bodybuilding efforts, but you would be wrong. This is because when any food or drink you take in is very high in sugar, it prompts a sudden surge of pancreatic activity to produce insulin.

Unfortunately, while your body is still heavily laden with insulin, it is not capable of losing fat, because the natural hormonal imbalance that has been generated triggers fat storage.

Foods and drinks that have lower GI figures are far better for anyone who is an active bodybuilder, because the release of sugar is naturally slower and therefore the surge of insulin is far more controlled as well.

This means that there are fewer 'highs' and 'lows' and that your appetite is likely to be far more controlled which minimizes the risk of suffering 'snack attacks'.

Lower glycemic index foodstuffs are extremely effective for controlling the amount of fat that you put on, while they also help bulk up your muscles and burn existing fat at the same time.

In a perfect scenario, all you would need to know about the carbohydrate you're eating would be the glycemic index, but nothing is perfect. There are a couple of reasons you cannot use GI as the only guide of how good particular carbohydrates are in your body building diet.

Firstly, if you take on board carbohydrates as well as proteins and fats in the same meal (as we have already established that you should) then both the proteins and fats will slow down the energy absorption from the carbohydrate.

Secondly, there are different types of carbohydrate and they are handled in different ways by the body.

On the one hand you have complex carbohydrates such as starchy foodstuffs like oatmeal, sweet potatoes and lentils, while on the other there are fibrous carbohydrates such as asparagus, broccoli, cauliflower and tomatoes. If you eat a combination of starchy and fibrous carbohydrates together, then the latter slows down the absorption of the former, thereby lowering their GI rating, which is better for building muscle and reducing fatty deposits.

Eat these compact carbohydrates in small portions at every meal, but make sure that there is a least one portion with every meal.

Whereas complex carbohydrates release energy into the body slowly, simple carbohydrates will do so much more quickly, so foodstuffs like apples, pears, oranges, peaches and strawberries will give you a far quicker energy boost.

The glycemic index is a measure of the power of food to increase blood glucose levels after consumption. The more power you take in, the more power needs to be burned off if you are going to attain the perfect shape and physique for bodybuilding purposes, whether this is for competition or purely for your own satisfaction.

A bodybuilding diet plan for the early stages: As suggested previously, one of the first things you must do if you are attempting to adopt a diet plan that is to build muscle mass without adding too much additional fat to your frame is to move from the traditional 'three

square meals a day' concept to a situation where you eat more regularly, but far less food is taken at every meal.

It is essential to understand that there is a huge industry out there which is actively and often very aggressively pushing supplements of one form or another as the 'cure all' answer that is going to make you into a champion bodybuilder overnight.

The first thing to say about some of these supplements is that they are not all necessarily bad. For example, some meal replacement supplements such as [Prolab Lean Mass Complex](#) offer an excellent way of replacing at least one meal every day with a simple to prepare but protein packed instant meal that also features only low glycemic carbohydrates.

However, there are also a lot of supplements of more dubious provenance on the market, and in most cases, it really is not necessary to spend a great deal of money on supplements of this nature.

Successful bodybuilding is a science like anything else, a combination of a successful training program and a diet that is specifically focused on building muscle mass while keeping extraneous fat to a minimum.

A diet that is ideal for a bodybuilder is very little different from the kind of diet that you would expect any high performance athlete to adopt. Irrespective of whether your bodybuilding efforts are aimed at competition or only at personal satisfaction, the same rules still apply. Eat an athletic diet, keep training, and you will inevitably acquire the shape and physique you are looking for.

It is also important to understand that, while there are many extremely popular 'diet plans' such as the South Beach diet, the Atkins diet and more recently, the Jenny Craig diet, a diet for activity (or perhaps more accurately, extreme activity in the case of bodybuilding) is significantly different because while all of these diets focus on reducing fat, none of them are particularly focused on building muscle mass.

Your diet for bodybuilding is likely to be far less strict about what you can and cannot eat, but much broader and all-encompassing than any of these weight-loss-only diet plans. Remember that as a bodybuilder, someone who works out on a regular basis as a part of a preplanned program of muscle building, you cannot afford to be tired or lethargic, whereas it is an unfortunate fact that diet plans which focus only on weight loss can often leave you feeling this way.

Hence, the basis of your body building diet should be focused on the following characteristics and ideas:

- Eat plenty of green vegetables and fresh fruit, while including other essential foods such as whole grains, nuts, pulses, beans and seeds. The odd portion of occasional lean meat is acceptable, while fish, eggs and low-fat dairy products should also be included in your daily eating regime.
- Mono-saturated and polyunsaturated oil products should be included, while saturated fats such as those found in spreads, margarine and in most deep-fried foods should be avoided.
- You should limit your intake of alcohol, cholesterol, salt and any foods or drinks that contain non-natural or added sugar. For instance, while fruit juices which contain natural sugars are acceptable, soda and other similar soft drinks that are fortified with additional sugar should be avoided.
- Do not be tempted by apparently low-sugar soft drinks where the sugar has been replaced with artificial sweeteners. Besides the fact that many artificial sweeteners are of questionable safety, they are generally manufactured from various forms of chemical based solutions, some of which may appear on various banned substance lists.
- Drink plenty of water. For the average person who is 'dieting' (i.e. trying to lose weight), the normal recommendation is for a minimum of eight glasses of water a day, but given that a significant part of your body building efforts is going to be focused on training and exercise, you should 'up' this minimum daily requirement as necessary. Remember that it is almost physically impossible to drink too much water (it is *just about* possible to damage yourself by trying to drink many, many liters of water at the same sitting, but why would you do this?), so drinking as much water as you want makes a great deal of sense.

Once again, the perfect diet for you as in individual bodybuilder will depend upon your primary objective as a bodybuilder, and your current physical condition as well.

For example, for every foodstuff or beverage you take in, there is a '[Recommended Daily Intake](#)' that is agreed between various government bodies, and the scientific and medical communities.

The actual numbers tend to vary slightly from country to country, but the general picture that comes out of countries like the USA, Canada, the UK and Australia are all very similar in terms of how much of each different type of [foodstuff you need](#) for a continual healthy lifestyle.

Working with these averages will give you an idea of the kind of diet you need to in order to achieve the objectives which you have set yourself.

For example, if you are in the early stages of bodybuilding, where losing fat is the primary objective, then your diet should be aimed at creating an energy deficit.

Fat is nothing more than stored energy that you have consumed at some time in the past that was not burned off, so in order to lose that fat, you need to reverse the process that put it there in the first place. You need to consume 15% to 20% less energy than you need.

However, there is a fairly tricky balancing act to be maintained here, because if you are trying to lose fat while also building muscle mass, you are actually asking your body to do two things which are completely opposite to one another as far as your metabolism is concerned. The act of breaking down the fat is called catabolism, which is one process, while the building up muscle is called anabolism, which is almost diametrically opposite.

If left to its own devices in the event of an energy deficit induced by diet, your body will start to break down fat to provide the missing energy, but it will also try to burn muscle.

This is one reason why weight training is such an essential part of body building activity. By continuing to train while reducing your energy intake, you effectively prevent your body focusing on muscle as a source of energy. Consequently, your body is forced to look elsewhere for its energy source - meaning that after the 'fast burn' glycogen that is the first source of energy your body always turns to, it then turns to burning fat because weight training protects your muscles.

Indeed, it is now believed that even at rest, the more muscle you have, the more your body will focus on burning fat as an energy source.

If you are still in the initial bodybuilding stage where getting rid of fat is your primary consideration, it is still critical to take up weight training as soon as possible. In doing so, you ensure that your body 'burns' the parts that you want it to burn, rather than it doing what comes naturally, looking for energy wherever it might be found.

A diet plan for the later stages: Once you have shifted a significant amount of the fat that you want to get rid of, you are ready to move on to the next stage of your body building diet plan, but before you do, here is something to understand.

In the initial stages, you reduce the amount of energy you are consuming to below the minimum of what you really need as a way of prompting your body to use stored fat to make up the energy deficits.

You have managed to get rid of most of this fat, but you should not try to get rid of all body fat before moving on to the next phase. This is because during this next phase, you are going to reverse the previous eating program by eating more than you need. The primary objective of this is to build additional muscle mass, but it is also an inevitable side effect that you will also generate some additional body fat.

In this next 'bulking up' phase, you should aim to consume around 15% to 20% more energy than an average person of your size and weight needs to get through the average day.

You can either guess on this, or you can use a [size and weight calculator](#) to get a more accurate picture of what you need to eat every day to satisfy your muscle building requirements.

In terms of the type of foods that you consume, you should certainly up your protein consumption, while you must also remember that every meal should be as well balanced as possible. Nevertheless, protein is the bedrock on which muscle is built, so a significant percentage of the additional calories that you are ingesting should be in the form of proteins.

Next, you should commence a solid program of weight training if you have not already done so, because it is by weight training that you stimulate your muscles to grow, and it is the growth of your muscles that channels most of the additional energy that you are taking in every day in that direction (as opposed to building fat stores).

However, it is inevitable that while you are trying to channel most of the surplus energy in the direction of building additional muscle mass, a certain percentage of it will accumulate as body fat.

The final phase of your body building efforts once the muscle mass is increasing is to encourage your body to do exactly what it doesn't want to do, which is to become catabolic and anabolic at the same time.

While this is not going to happen overnight, after some weeks or months of weight training and eating to build muscle mass, you should see that your physique and basic shape has already changed significantly. In short, you will have added muscle mass, but you will also have added some extra fat.

However, this is not the same as some overweight or obese individual who could serve as a poster boy (or girl) for couch potatoes everywhere! In other words, while you will have put on a little more fat,

you will still nevertheless be possessed of far more muscle mass than you were previously, so your need to lose weight is entirely different from that of the average obese person.

Nevertheless, if you want to shed the final few pounds of fat so that you achieve the classic bodybuilder physique, you do need to convince your body to do what it does not want to do. This is a strategy that all professional or high-level competition bodybuilders have to go through on a regular basis, a process that is known as 'cutting', the removal of the final few pounds of excess fat that allows the muscle mass to shine through.

To do this, your diet has to be extremely low in fat (less than 20%) while maintaining a high level of protein to protect and promote the muscle mass which you have been working on with such dedication. Keep protein intake at least as high as in previous weeks and months, while cutting down on sugars, sweets and white flour products and maintaining your intake of antioxidant fresh fruits and vegetables.

Taking the two diet phases step-by-step, you might therefore end up with a bodybuilding diet that looks something like this:

Phase 1 – 'Building mass' or bulking phase

Carbohydrates: 50% to 60%

Proteins: 15% to 20%

Fats: 20% to 30%

Phase 2 – Trimming down or cutting phase

Carbohydrates: 50% to 60%

Proteins: 20% to 30%

Fats: 10% to 20%

One note of caution that you should heed is that these numbers, particularly the intake of proteins, are at the top end of the acceptable scale, so do keep an eye on your general health. Although overconsumption of proteins is not likely to harm any healthy, fit individual, you should nevertheless exercise care. For example, if there is any indication of kidney problems, you should consult a medical professional immediately.

The American College of Sports Medicine suggests that the ideal protein consumption for a top-level athlete who is constantly training is in the region of 1.6 to 1.7 g of protein materials per kilogram of body weight, so bear this number in mind when you are calculating the amount of proteins that you are consuming either while bulking up, or (more importantly) when you are trying to trim down.

If at all possible, take these proteins as part of your normal daily diet, rather than ingesting a huge number of protein shakes and the like every day.

While if you are using some kind of trainer to help you build the physique you are looking for, you may find that they are very heavily in favor of using supplements of this nature, it is far better if you can eat the proteins that you need as a part of your normal daily diet.

If there is no other reason for this, buying huge amounts of protein shakes can become extremely expensive, which might take some of the fun out of what you are doing if your body building efforts are for your own satisfaction only!

Weight training for bodybuilding

One of the great things about using the internet for 'learning' is that there are some subjects where the net happens to be the perfect medium to pick up all of the information you could ever need.

Weight training for bodybuilding is one terrific example of this, because by the very nature of body building, it is a 'sport' that is focused on looking good.

Consequently, there are hundreds of bodybuilding enthusiasts on the net who are more than happy to show off exactly how they got to where they are today, which presents you with an 'open window' through which you can learn from other people who have already 'been there and done that'.

Run any kind of net search for weight training for bodybuilding information, and there is a ton of stuff available for free.

Even more importantly, because many of the weight training educational materials are available on video, it is not just a question of reading about what people do, you can watch them as they train. Most people find that watching is far more educational than reading about something, so this is a major bodybuilding advantage that was not available to our forebears.

For instance, run a standard search of [YouTube.com](https://www.youtube.com) for 'weight training' information, and there are over 62,000 videos available, with many of these being focused on weight training for bodybuilding:

“weight training” results 1 - 20 of about 62,100

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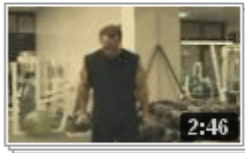


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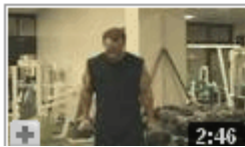


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Biceps Workouts - **Weight Training** Exercises For Big Arms

This video is from ShapeFit.com's **weight training** workouts video series. The video

★★★★★ 1 year ago 258,484 views [bad959fl](#)

The basic idea of weight training for bodybuilding is that you need to focus on developing the muscle groups that need most development for you to acquire the shape that you want to acquire.

Going back to an earlier example to highlight this point, you may remember that Larry Scott spent a great deal of time working on developing his deltoid and pectoral muscles to gain the shape that he wanted, because these were the muscles that he needed to develop to create a 'fake' V-shape that is (or was) the classic bodybuilding shape.

You need to do the same thing by designing a weight training program that focuses on the muscles you most want to develop.

While for many bodybuilders this will mean focusing on the muscles of the upper torso and waist area, it does not follow that this will always be the case. For example, there have been competition bodybuilders who have had to spend a great deal of time on developing muscles in their legs, because they were people who had great muscle development in the upper half of the body, but very skinny legs!

There is also the question of why you are body building in the first place. If you are developing a physique for your own satisfaction and fitness, then your objectives may well differ from those of a competition bodybuilder who has to attain a body shape that satisfies objective judges, rather than themselves.

In short, your weight training program should be designed to achieve what you want to achieve, but even a quick online survey of the instructional materials available should enable you to find weight training exercises that will satisfy your own requirements extremely effectively.

Conclusion

Over the years, bodybuilding has acquired something of a 'mixed' reputation due to the undoubted fact that far too many bodybuilders have gone about sculpting their physique in completely the wrong way.

There is equally little doubt that while bodybuilding is cleaning up its act, there are still many people who are far too quick to turn to artificial drugs and other substances to help them build the physique and shape that they want without having to put in the work and effort that might otherwise be necessary if they did everything naturally.

This in no way condones or justifies using artificial drugs and substances as part of your body building efforts. As with everything in life, drugs and other such substances do have adverse side-effects, many of which take years to become apparent, and many of these side-effects are potentially highly dangerous as well.

Nowadays, the overwhelming majority of serious bodybuilders treat those that are discovered to have used artificial substances as part of their body building efforts with disdain and contempt. It is not necessary to do anything other than what is entirely natural to become a superb physical example of a successful bodybuilder, and there is no justification for doing anything that is not 100% natural.

However, there can be no denying that becoming a successful bodybuilder is not a walk in the park, and that there is a degree of effort and dedication involved in acquiring a physique that is the envy of all other non-bodybuilders.

Nevertheless, by adopting a diet that will enable you to build muscle mass and reduce unnecessary body fat while also putting in regular shifts on the weights in the gym, you can build yourself a superb bodybuilder's physique without any artificial stimulants or substances.

In other words, becoming a bodybuilding success story entirely naturally is well within the compass of any average person, and therefore, if having a physique that is the envy of all your friends has always been an ambition, there has never been a better time to get started than now!