



## Your body shape solution

*Apple? Pear? Banana? We're talking about your physique – not a fruit salad. Whether you carry your weight on your buttocks – or are as straight as an ironing board – there are fitness and nutrition guidelines tailor-made for you.*

Before learning how to exercise and eat according to your silhouette, celebrate the fact there's no ideal body shape. As Cape Town personal trainer Chaz Hanmer says, these prescribed exercises aren't carved in stone and you needn't limit yourself to these suggested movements. Whatever your size or fitness level, there are numerous ways to improve your health.

Johannesburg clinical nutritionist Desi Horsman explains that everyone's genes are different and what works for you won't necessarily work for someone else. With that in mind, certain movements can target the specific muscle groups you might need to focus on depending on your body shape.

## WHERE DO YOU FIT IN?

### **Pear (female) and Triangle (male)**

You're small on top and larger at the bottom. As a pear-shape, you carry more weight around your hips, thighs and buttocks than

your waist. In addition, your shoulders are generally narrower than your waist.

**Why:** Horsman says high levels of estrogen is the main contributing factor for storing fat around these regions. ‘Triangle-shaped men have lower testosterone and higher estrogen levels. They also tend to be smaller on top and lose muscle weight easier,’ she explains. For women, this weight tends to be harder to lose than it is to put on, but Horsman says it’s “better” than a large belly where the fat collects around your organs. This is known as visceral fat, or “bad fat”. ‘People with large bellies are more prone to heart disease because of it,’ she says.

### Exercise

Cape Town biokineticist Richard Woolrich says the following exercises are great for pears and triangles.

- **Rowing:** Improves the shape and tone of your underdeveloped upper body.
- **Deadlifts:** This is an excellent compound exercise that targets your quads, hamstrings, buttock muscles, lower back and forearms. Remember, you don’t need to lift a huge barbell. A light weight is perfect for beginners.
- **Static lunges:** These give your thigh muscles a good workout. And you guessed it, your feet remain in the same position (static) throughout the exercise.

### Nutrition

Steer away from foods (such as low-quality processed meats and milk) that might have added growth hormones. Rather stick to quality meats from free-range animals and organic milk. Lots of fruit, vegetables and fibre will also help you rid your body of hormones.

### Apple (female) and Oval (male)

Most of your weight is around your middle, and your lower body is slimmer. Your legs are toned, your butt might be quite flat and your shoulders are slightly rounded.

**Why:** Your adrenal glands and increased production of certain hormones can contribute to this body type. Cortisol, for instance, is a fat-storing hormone and is often associated with stress. ‘Unfortunately, abdominal fat collects around your organs, which increases your risk of heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure.’ says Horsman. This visceral fat around your kidneys and liver can also cause spikes in insulin levels. ‘The good news is apples and ovals find it easier to lose weight than pears because abdominal fat can break up quickly,’ she adds.

## Exercise

Cape Town biokineticist Richard Woolrich says the following exercises are fit for apples and ovals.

- **Cardiovascular training:** Think skipping and running. High-intensity cardio exercise burns calories fast.
- **Leg workouts:** Focusing on your biggest muscles, such as your legs, helps torch those calories.
- **Plank:** This targets and strengthens your core muscles.

## Nutrition

‘Your diet should be a good combination of protein and carbohydrates,’ Horsman says. ‘Apple-shaped people often have a tendency to crave fatty and salty foods, which stimulate your adrenal glands.’ Rather focus on eating small meals throughout the day and avoid high-carb foods.

## Inverted triangle (female) Rhomboid (male)

Also known as the swimmer’s body, you have large, broad shoulders and narrower hips.

**Why:** Elevated levels of testosterone can contribute to a pronounced upper body.

## Exercise

- **Squats, lunges and deadlifts:** Woolrich says these exercises all target your lower body. They also increase muscle mass and tone in your buttocks and legs.
- **Medicine-ball torso rotations:** These movements can define your core and provide balance for your body’s shape and strength.
- **Light weights:** Sculpt your muscles without increasing their size or bulk.

## Nutrition

‘Focus on non-starchy vegetables, fresh fruits, lean proteins, whole grains, low-fat or non-fat dairy products, and nuts and seeds,’ says dietician Ryan Andrews of Precision Nutrition.

## Hourglass (female)

You’re curvaceous, with a narrow waist, generous bust and equally wide hips. ‘If you’re an hourglass body type, you generally gain weight all over, especially under your arms, on your thighs and around your hips,’ says Horsman.

**Why:** You need to maintain a good balance between typically male and female hormones, such as estrogen and testosterone. Testosterone keeps your top in proportion and estrogen levels can



affect your hips, Horsman explains. 'If you don't watch your food intake, you might find yourself gaining weight around your stomach,' she says.

### Exercise

- **Double-arm rows:** Focus on your shoulders and back muscles.
- **Plank:** Strengthens your abdominal muscles. A side plank targets other areas of your mid-section.
- **Glute bridging:** Tones and strengthens your buttock muscles.

### Nutrition

Steer away from low-grade processed meats and milk that might have added growth hormones. Rather stick to quality meats from free-range animals and organic milk. Lots of fruit, vegetables and fibre will also help you rid your body of unnecessary hormones.

### Banana (male & female)

If you're a banana body type, your shoulders, waist and hips all have similar measurements. Not sure? Draw an imaginary line from your shoulders down to your waist, and think of your shoulders, waist and hips all bordering the line. You're also fairly lean and not prone to gaining extra weight.

**Why:** An overactive thyroid often produces an excess of the thyroid hormone, which can lead to a very high metabolism. Women with high levels of androgyn also tend to have this body shape, Horsman adds. Male banana shapes often have thickish arms and thighs and can put on weight quite easily.

### Exercise

- **Plank:** Exercise the muscles that shape and flatten your stomach.
- **Stomach hollowing:** Pull in your belly for 30 seconds at a time. This strengthens your internal abdominal muscle and aids good posture.
- **Shoulder exercises:** Develop your shoulders to minimise a blocky appearance.

### Nutrition

'Being slender doesn't necessarily mean you're healthy,' says Horsman. Incorporate lots of plant-based foods in your diet and eat smaller meals during the day.

## ASSESS YOUR HEALTH

Bankmed benefits make provision for one Personal Health Assessment (PHA) per beneficiary, over the age of 18, per year. This is a health-screening tool that highlights any current health risks. Once any risk is identified, it will need to be confirmed by your GP. For more, and to download your Personal Health Assessment & HIV/AIDS Counselling and Testing questionnaire, visit [www.bankmed.co.za/portal/individual/personal-health-assessment](http://www.bankmed.co.za/portal/individual/personal-health-assessment)