

# How Much Muscle Can You Gain Naturally?

🕒 Updated 4 weeks ago    📁 Muscle Building



get questions all the time from 5'10" guys who want to be a ripped 190 lbs.

This tells me there is a huge misconception about how much muscle the average man can gain naturally.

## Lee Boyce Reveals His Top Muscle Building Tips

**BL**

Lee Boyce is a Toronto based strength coach and fitness writer who is fast rising...

## How Do Muscles Grow? The Science of Muscle Growth

**BL**

If you're the typical guy in the gym working with weights, not only do you...

## How Fast Can You Build Muscle? 5 Factors That Affect



who take steroids on their covers.

The following digs deeper into this question of maximum muscle potential for men and offers some equations to estimate how much muscle you can gain naturally.

I've discussed in depth How Much Muscle You Can Gain Naturally, or your maximum muscle...

## Unnatural vs. Natural Physiques

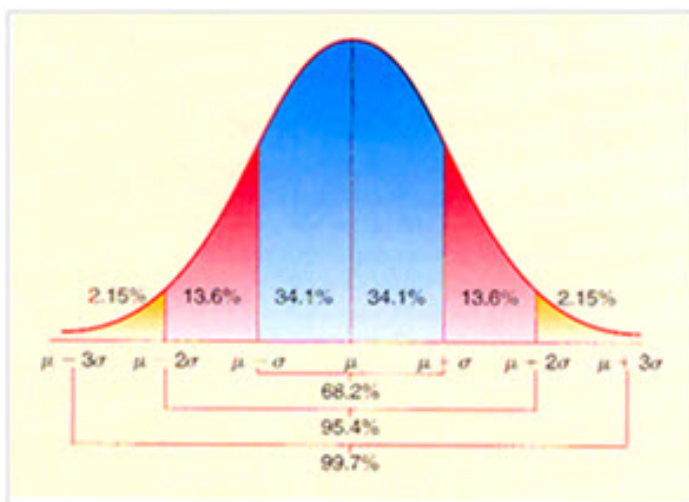
If you see a 250lb bodybuilder with veins popping out all over the place, you can be sure that dude not only takes steroids, but a bunch of mostly illegal, dangerous supplements, referred to as a "stack".

Not only are 99% of bodybuilders taking steroids, even a large percentage of fitness models (men and women) who promote supplements take steroids, or HGH (human growth hormone). I wish it weren't true, but sadly, this is what I've learned being part of the fitness industry.

percentage of the bodybuilding industry do not take any steroids, or other heavy-duty, performance enhancing substances.

**NOTE:** All the formulas to arrive at your maximum muscle potential in this article are based on natural male bodybuilders who are extremely dedicated individuals and have lifted for oftentimes 10+ years.

## The Genetic Bell Curve



The bell curve can be applied to body type to arrive at what percentage of

development.

If you remember statistics, this genetic bell curve implies about 68% of people are average (within 1 standard deviation of the mean), 16% are below average, and 16% are above average.

People who are “average” will respond by gaining muscle over time with solid training and nutrition, and will be statistically average in terms of total muscle potential. The formulas in this article are based upon this genetic average.

The 16% of people who are “below average” will not genetically be able to put on as much muscle despite using the same exercise, or nutrition regimen. The 16% who are “above average” can get bigger just by looking at weights! I’m sure you’ve seen, or know a guy like this.

## MUSCLE GAIN

# Potential Formula #1: BuiltLean.com

I came up with this short hand approach to calculate your maximum [Lean Body Mass \(LBM\)](#). Your LBM is everything in your body besides fat, including your bones, organs, muscle, and blood. This approach gives very similar results to the #2 formula below.

$$(\text{Your Height in Inches} - 70) \times 5 + 160 = \text{Maximum LBM}$$

This equation implies that starting at 160lb, add 5lb for every inch you are over 5'10", or subtract 5lb for every inch you are below 5'10". That's the maximum LBM you can gain naturally assuming you are in the average span of the genetic bell curve. Pretty simple.

to have on your body given your maximum LBM. For example, if you had an LBM max of 160lb with 10lb of fat, you would have a total body weight of 170lb and a body fat percentage of 6% (10lb of fat divided by 170).

## Muscle Gain Potential Formula #2: LeanGains.com

This formula is from natural bodybuilder Martin Berkahn over at LeanGains.com who coaches other natural bodybuilders. Needless to say, he has a great feel for the max amount of muscle you can build naturally.

The following formula is elegant because it's so simple and is impressively accurate for most people:

## Strength in Centimeters (100) = Max Body Weight in Kg When Ripped

The only downside of this equation is that the Max Body Weight is given “when ripped” (i.e. 5-6% body fat, or shredded with no visible fat). I prefer using LBM, from which you can simply add on whatever amount of fat you think is reasonable.

To save you from centimeter and kilogram conversions, I have a chart below that shows for a given height the maximum muscle potential when ripped using the LeanGains formula (“Max Ripped”) and the Max LBM (assuming 6% body fat):

5'6"	149	140
5'7"	154	145
5'8"	160	150
5'9"	166	156
5'10"	171	161
5'11"	177	166
6'0"	182	171
6'1"	188	177
6'2"	194	182
6'3"	199	187
6'4"	205	192
6'5"	210	198

# Muscle Gain Potential Formula #3: Frame Size Model

From my experience, I think the following formula overestimates maximum muscle potential (my guess is there may be some selection bias, which includes many champion bodybuilders), but I wanted to include it because it's often cited and it's based on exhaustive research.

Casey Butt is a natural bodybuilder who came up with a formula for calculating muscle potential based on height, wrist



put on more muscle even at the same height as those with smaller bone structures, which makes perfect sense.

$$\text{Maximum lean body mass} = H^{1.5} \left( \frac{\sqrt{W}}{22.6670} + \frac{\sqrt{A}}{17.0104} \right) \left( \frac{\%bf}{224} + 1 \right)$$

where,

H = Height in inches

A = Ankle circumference at the smallest point

W = Wrist circumference measured on the hand side of the styloid process.

(The styloid process is the bony lump on the outside of your wrist.)

%bf = The body fat percentage at which you want to predict your maximum lean body mass

I'm guessing you don't want to solve this equation yourself, so here's a link to the [muscle potential calculator](#).

The difference between the BuiltLean.com & LeanGains.com and the Frame Size Model is typically around 8-15lb. For a very detailed discussion of not only muscle potential, but also maximum body measurements, you can check out this article.

potential, just focus on training hard, eating more calories than you burn with ample protein, and see how the chips fall.

In my opinion, you don't need as much muscle as you think to have an exceptionally aesthetic physique that is also very strong.

In fact, I think you can take off a solid 15lb off the genetic muscle potential chart above for your height, and you will still have a great physique when lean.

I also believe building too much muscle can be taxing for your entire body, including your organs, but I guess that's a conversation for another time.

Hope this was helpful. Let me know if you have any questions!



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**RELATED POSTS****67 Comments.****Youssef**

March 30, 2011 10:31 pm

Awesome article !

I have heard that people with wrists cannot develop bigger muscles ! is it true?

I am 5' 11" and 173 lbs with small wrist frame.

What unit are you using in the Formula # 3 to measure wrist and ankle? inch or metric ?

thanks

**Marc Perry**

March 30, 2011 11:02 pm

@Youssef – Well according to Casey Butt's framework, smaller wrists imply a smaller frame, which means less muscle potential. Ankle and wrist sizes are in inches. You can check out the calculator in the link I included in the article. Thanks for the comment!

amazing article. packed with facts and stats. nicely done

### **AverageJoe**

April 6, 2011 11:22 pm

I always love reading articles like this one. It lets me know where my limitations are so that I can slow down if I start succeeding too much. I like to train in a way that confuses my muscles so they don't get used to what I'm doing and respond. Also, I don't ever eat more than 2500 kcal a day. Yousef, your small wrists are practically a death sentence.

### **Marc Perry**

April 7, 2011 5:00 pm

@Average Joe – Thanks for the tongue and cheek comment. The point of the article is not to highlight limitation, but to help guys who may have unrealistic expectations of how much muscle can be added to naturally to their frames. I'm going to go into this in more depth in a future article, but

190lb and ripped when you are 5'10" is nearly impossible unless you are blessed with 1 in a 1000 genetics. I want to encourage guys to work hard, focus on strength, while losing fat without losing muscle. I've seen guys at 160lb, 6 feet tall, who are extremely strong with physiques that any guy would kill for.

**James Barclay**

April 28, 2011 7:18 am

Marc,

Thanks for your reply to my last post very helpful! Another query I have and no doubt more to follow this (supposing you don't mind) is I'm understanding fully what you mean when you say we can build a great muscular physique whilst maintaining a deceptively modest weight as I'm pretty light myself standing at 5'10" and 155lb with body fat at 12% but having a decent amount of lean muscle mass. I intend to cut my body fat ultimately to maybe 9-10%

mean feat. So I'll try out this muscle building cycle you advise and then go for the fat reduction thereafter, however I'd like to maintain good cardiovascular fitness and keep the fat at bay in the meantime. So the question is, how much cardio would be suitable for me and at which times of the day etc as I don't want to run the risk of burning any of the recent muscle I have gained?.

Thanks in advance.

James

**Marc Perry**

April 29, 2011 4:15 pm

@James, I think doing [High Intensity Interval Training](#) a couple times per week should be enough to help you maintain solid cardio shape. You can also do some jump rope before your workouts. The great thing about interval training is that the intensity is very high, the volume is less than running for 30 minutes, it takes less time, and

squeeze it in. If you've been lifting for several years, I think 0.5-1lb of muscle gain per month is what you should shoot for. You may get lucky and put on more size faster, but building muscle is a long process that takes patience. Don't forget to focus on most important movements like squats etc.

**Paul**

May 22, 2011 2:14 am

I have to admit, I'm not sure what to think of that chart. I'm only 5'6, and it's hard to imagine myself at a mere 150 pounds. I thought I'd look pretty good if I achieved my goals of bringing my weight down to 200 (250 now) pounds while increasing my Power clean to 200 pounds (154 now). Just for context, I also power lift, box, and hike. Would a 200 pound person who can lift 200 pounds over their head still be fat?

**Marc Perry**

May 25, 2011 7:15 pm

physiological marker than body fat. It's comparing apples to oranges. I've certainly seen some powerlifters who had at least 20% body fat, but they were very strong and in great shape. So I would recommend getting your body fat measured to see what your LBM is. From there, you can make a determination as to what weight you want to shoot for that is reasonable given your genetics: <https://www.builtlean.com/ideal-body-weight-formula-how-to-calculate-your-ideal-weight/>. Hope this is helpful and good luck!

**Toni**

July 1, 2011 3:25 pm

I think some bodybuilders aren't as strong as you think. Meaning that real strength doesn't necessarily equal big, beefy muscles. I've seen some pretty lean guys that are very strong. Also, I have a small wrist circumference and a small frame. Just because I can't "bulk" up like the female bodybuilders I've



And maybe it's me but I don't find big, bulky guys all that attractive. The ideal male physique (in my mind) would be someone built like George Eads, the actor who plays Nick Stokes from CSI. He's in great shape;(at age 44, I might add) lean and extremely fit but not overdone where his veins are popping everywhere. But that's just me.

**Matt A**

July 16, 2011 12:24 pm

I'm 5-10.75 weigh 260 and am 40 years old with 18% bfat equals 213.2lbs lbm and have never used steroids. I weighed 90lbs at 13 years old. Your theory has just been debunked. It's not true because natural powerlifters are my height 275 10%-13% bfat or 335 and 15-19%. That 28-30% is blatantly blatantly false.

**Marc Perry**

July 18, 2011 2:12 pm

@Matt A – Thanks for sharing your observations. Could you send me some photos of some of these

never seen that before in my life. I guess these guys are several standard deviations from the mean. Not sure that completely “debunks” the theory, but I agree some people are able to put on much more mass than the average. One of my trainers is 5’8” and 210lb, probably 12% body fat. He puts on muscle just by looking at weights.

**Michael**

August 13, 2011 7:53 pm

Marc,

I think overall you are very accurate with what the typical person can gain in LBM. I have worked out and been a fitness enthusiast for over 30 years and my observation has confirmed what you have written here. For the vast majority of people, the reality is that that can only gain about 10 to 15 lbs of lean body mass (read muscle not fat or “bulk” weight) over the course of a lifetime. As you note there are exceptions but they are very rare

added 30 to 40 lbs of “mass” have mostly added fat with some muscle. Additionally and unfortunately, most guys are too focused on the “weight.”

Almost every guy wants to weigh over 200 lbs and have low bodyfat but for the majority of people not using Steroids etc, this is not going to happen. Most guys that i have observed at the gym are in eternal bulk mode. They have size but also the accompanying bodyfat as evidenced by larger waists etc. I know this b/c at 6 feet, I used to weigh 215 lbs and loved the weight aspect. The problem I had was that my waist was 38 inches. Now I am 170lbs, cut and have good symmetry. My focus is on boxing with strength training only as a supplement.

**Marc Perry**

August 14, 2011 2:44 pm

@Michael – Thanks for sharing your insights. Dropping from 215lb and a 38 inch waist to a ripped

**mark wright**

September 17, 2011 11:02 am

im afraid the formula youve given is wrong, it works in the calculator but im an A level maths student and I keep getting an answer of 31.18109, which would be pretty worrying. Has anyone had success actually using the formula themselves?

**Keith**

October 11, 2011 12:19 am

There was an article in live strong about height to weight saying that going past a weight for a specific height becomes unhealthy and someone asked what if that weight were muscle ie Max weight for 5 ' 10 is 175 does that mean a guy who is 250 with muscle at that height is unhealthy. It seems that there comes a point where to much weight even tho its muscle it becomes unhealthy and inefficient

**Marc Perry**

October 11, 2011 1:53 pm

I try to bulk up by lifting a ton of weight and eating a ton of food, I feel bloated all the time and my joints feel terrible. Whenever I've gotten basically bigger than what my frame can handle optimally, I never feel great. Also, adding too much muscle can be taxing on your organs as well. Thanks for the comment!

**Fredo**

October 19, 2011 2:21 pm

Hey Marc great advice you are giving. I never had a six-pack I got really close though. I was at 165 bench pressing 205, doing 80 pushups, squatting heavy, and lifting heavy. I would run a mile a day but before that I made sprints by school sprinting 15 seconds then joggin 15 seconds I would do 3 minutes on 4 sets. I got frustrated because i was so close but yet so far and out of frustration i gained weight i went from 165 to 190 but now im at 173, im doing pushups now all kinds with a medicine ball perfect push up all kinds

believe that it was my diet that prevented me from getting my abs was it that i was only eating 20 grams of fat, but i was eating a lot of protein and a moderate carbs help me pleazz

**Marc Perry**

October 21, 2011 9:47 am

@Fredo – Happy to hear you are back in shape and approaching your goal. I do agree getting very lean is primarily a nutritional challenge. The reality is that you can use several different workout programs and still get lean if you really nail the nutrition.

I understand you are using a very low fat diet, which I think is too low. I wouldn't go below 20% fat as a percent of total calorie intake because of hormonal issues that can arise with a very low fat intake. You should consider a lower carb intake to see how that works for you. Keeping insulin levels low can help aid in fat burning. For a lot more information, check out my

[Food Groups](#)". Finally, if you are looking for a program which takes the guesswork out of changing your body, you can check out my [BuiltLean Program](#).

**Josh**

October 20, 2011 11:02 am

I just turned 30yrs old back in April and now weigh 205lbs. I'm 5'10" and am looking to get back to my leaner days of 170lbs. Most of my weight has gone directly to my gut from inactivity and poor eating habits. I also have small wrists and was looking to get back to the gym. I'm looking to lose 30lbs of fat and gain 5lbs of muscle over the next 6 months. Is this goal attainable?

**Marc Perry**

October 21, 2011 10:15 am

@Josh – Happy to hear you are ready to get back into shape. I think those goals are definitely reasonable. Shooting for 1-2lb of fat loss per week is a very reasonable goal. So focusing on

lucky and put on some muscle as well), then once you are leaner adding a few pounds to your frame I think is reasonable. You may find that once you are lean you may be very strong and fit and like the way you look, so you may not want to put on those extra 5lb. 5lb is a somewhat arbitrary number, in that maybe it only takes a couple pounds of muscle in the right places to satisfy your needs. You sound like a good candidate for my BuiltLean Program, so I encourage you to seriously consider it:

**BuiltLean Program.**

### **Macias**

October 27, 2011 1:09 pm

Hey Marc, nice article!

Have been working out for a few months now, at 5"9 i am 140lbs and 5,4% bodyfat (measured at the gym). Did a lot of research about workouts and nutrition/supplimentation. Could i really gain another 26lbs of pure muscle? (21 years) That would be



Thanks!

**Marc Perry**

October 28, 2011 3:53 pm

@Macias – I think gaining another 20lb sounds reasonable. You may find gaining more, or less will suit your aesthetic/performance goals. It's tough to pick out a number out of thin air so to speak. Just remember to be patient. 1lb of muscle per month is a decent pace of muscle growth, so could take a few years. Be sure to check out this post if you haven't already:  
[How Fast Can You Build Muscle](#)

**Landon**

November 3, 2011 11:01 pm

Im 5'11" 250 pounds I took some fitness evaluation at my gym and they took some tests and they told me if I had 0% body fat I would weight 190 pounds. Never touched steroids in my life. So I think your article is 100% false. And at 250 my veins are popping out.

NOVEMBER 7, 2011 6:02 PM

@Landon – You may be 3-4 standard deviations from the mean, so yes, a statistical outlier. Do think Danny makes a good point about water weight and body fat accuracy as well. Generally speaking, when i see a guy fully lean out, he weighs AT LEAST 10-15 pounds less than he thought.

**Danny**

November 5, 2011 6:54 pm

@Landon

you're 24% body fat and keep in mind that those body fat tests are not always accurate and there's also water weight to keep into account.

Also what you all are missing is that  
YOU CAN'T MAINTAIN THE AMOUNT  
OF MUSCLE YOU HAVE NOW WHEN  
YOU DROP BODY FAT!

So it's impossible to say that you would be 190 if you were 0% body fat as if you could lose 30 lbs of fat while maintaning the same amount of

more muscles to be retained, once you lose the fat the amount of muscle you can have in your body is greatly reduced. That's why sumo wrestler have the most lean body mass of any other wrestler, training, bodybuilder in the world. The fatter you are the more muscles you can have, the leaner you are the less muscles you can have. It's a physiological law!

**Perry**

December 2, 2011 4:30 pm

very good artical, i am 6ft and 16 yrs old, been going to the gm 4 months and have put on 2 stone. From 10 to 12 however not all muscle of course, i would nt mind being 13.5 stone with 10-15% bf. As i am still growing how do i be realistic in my goals?

**Marc Perry**

December 4, 2011 5:49 pm

@Perry – Yes, I do think that's realistic. Your weight goal and body fat goal would imply a roughly 158lb LBM, which is definitely

and don't be discourage if your results slow down, which is only natural.

**Jordan**

December 3, 2011 12:48 am

First off I wanted to start by saying, Great article!!! I found it to be a great read. I was looking all over the web for viable sources of information that I could compare to my own research and studies. I wanted to ask about your thoughts on my particular situation. Im a college student in athletics(Football and Track). Ive been lifting for about 2 years and its geared towards both of them. Not as heavy as other football players, but more lifting then the average track athlete. example: I lift like a football player M-F(Wed off) but the lifts are many reps(8-16) but focused on explosiveness. Im 6'0.5 weighing 182.5,I have skinny wrist and skinny ankles like most track athletes. Im lanky and lean but decently strong(bench press is not impressive). Im not exactly sure of my body fat, but ive been on a

close to 4 miles every other day under 5:30 pace and focus on sprint/hurdle technique during the other days(This is till January then the workouts begin shift and focus to straight sprinting/hurdling). My weight amazingly doesnt really drop. Fluctuating between 180 and 182 during track season. During football its in between 183-185(less running), and for me to have that NFL appearance and weight I usually take creatine. It increases my weight only 5 to 6 pounds, but 6'0 191 with 4.3 low speed sticks out. I would like to hear your recommendations on how to achieve 190-191 while still maintaining my lean ripped look and speed of 180-182, or is it physiologically impossible without cheating(hgh,steriods,creatine, etc.) My goal is to stay natural.

**Marc Perry**

December 4, 2011 5:43 pm

@Jordan – Thanks for the email.

First off, your stats are the real deal. Very impressive. I think the

your success. If I recall correctly, wide receiver Joey Galloway in his prime was like 5'11" 180lb, yet ran a 4.15 40 and benched 400lb and squatted 400lb. My guess is if you are looking to go pro etc., the extra weight may be helpful, but the strength/speed/skill numbers may be more important.

My thinking is you never know something is possible until you try. Most athletes have a periodization type of lifting scheme with off-season, pre-season, in season, etc., which helps break up the training and helps the body recover and function optimally so you don't overtrain etc. Given you are also a track athlete, it sounds like your periodization scheme is a little different than most other athletes. In any event, during whatever you consider your off season, I would consider increasing your calorie/protein intake substantially, especially after workouts. So let's say you eat 3000 calories normally,

gaining muscle is tough. Then you can focus on the core, compound movements like deadlifts, bench, squats etc., and increase your weight on all those lifts while taking down your running volume. As I'm sure you know, just be really careful to warm up/foam roll/stretch because lifting is supposed to prevent injury and get you stronger, not cause injury.

If you want to be big, you gotta eat big as they say, and while I'm not the biggest fan of supplements, a couple protein shakes daily in addition to eating A LOT of food can help. Regarding creatine, it's technically a naturally occurring substance with a lot of benefits and some health experts go as far as prescribing 5g per day. Personally, like you, I don't really consider it "natural", but it is a fine line. If it gives you the edge you need, it may be worth taking it while making sure to drink a lot of water. I took creatine for years

be stuffing yourself with food every 3-4 hours. If for some reason you gain a little bit of fat, it's easy to burn off when you shift your diet, but it's better to gain a little fat and muscle than no fat, and no muscle. Just my two cents!

I do appreciate your desire to be natural and that's certainly a noble goal. My thinking is that if you increase your calorie/protein intake substantially while increasing your core lifts, you've got a very good shot at gaining quality muscle mass while retaining your speed.

On a random note, my buddy Dave who I did an interview with here:

<https://www.builtlean.com/2010/09/15/white-collar-job-professional-athlete-body/> was a track athlete and football player at the University of Texas. It's amazing the shape he is in even after being competitive.

**discerniblevim**

December 12, 2011 3:37 pm



Understanding the body fat percentage is easy enough given your other charts. There are those women who just want to be healthy/average and then those who want to be more than average, and want to know what they should weight. Part of that depends on how much effort they put into the development of lbm.

**Marc Perry**

December 13, 2011 3:08 pm

@discerniblevim – I don't know the answer for women max LBM. Generally speaking, the average woman I've come across who is around 5'4" to 5'5" typically will have around 100lb of LBM. A more athletic girl will have 110b-120lb. Not sure what the theoretical max is though.

**James Barclay**

December 12, 2011 3:42 pm

Hi Marc,

advice on what works best from different people. The question I feel most people can't agree on is whether or not you should train to failure for every set or just do enough reps around the 8-12 mark to make decent progress in strength and mass building. I'm sure I did a formula before where I would do for example 3 sets of dumbbell bench presses at 10 reps each which obviously equates to 30 reps total, however I've been trying recently to do as many reps in each set as I can possibly can which looks more like set 1: 14 reps set 2: 9 reps set 3: 7 reps (approximately). which equates to 30 reps total. I think when I tried the former of these two examples which was the even amount of reps per set (approximately) I was making better progress and after doing some limited research on the net it appears we don't need to absolutely kill the muscle every set taking it to failure each time, it's just that I think everyone would agree when you listen to (some) of the real die hard iron pumpers they can get a bit carried away when all they tell us is train

hear your views on this as it's clear from your physique you have had your tactics spot on since starting. Any comments would be appreciated.  
Thank you

**Marc Perry**

December 13, 2011 3:23 pm

@James – you are right, the fatigue vs. failure debate is one that will continue for many years to come. Several research reports have shown that strength increases are certainly comparable going to fatigue vs. failure. I'm not sure about fat loss/muscle building though. I prefer going to failure because I love the feeling of pushing myself to the max every set, but that's me. There are others who get great results going to fatigue instead of failure.

In terms of aesthetics, it's mostly nutrition. Also, just because you are going to fatigue, doesn't mean you can't work hard in the gym and get a great workout that breaks

At the end of the day, who cares what other people say! Do what works for you and you enjoy!

**Darren**

December 21, 2011 6:30 pm

Hi Marc,

I'm a little confused regarding the LBM chart? I'm 5 foot 9 about 155 lbs. Can you please explain it as it relates to my height and weight?

Additionally, what workouts and foods should i be eating to achieve a strong core/ 6 pack?

Thanks

**Marc Perry**

December 22, 2011 6:23 pm

@Darren – According to the LeanGains formula, your max body weight when ripped is 165lb, which would put your total body weight around 175lb with 5-6% body fat. In order to apply the BuiltLean.com

**John**

December 21, 2011 9:00 pm

Hey Marc,

First and foremost i have never understood what is meant by a natural body builder. Sure they are not taking steroids and peds but are they on suplements and if so what types? (generally speaking).

Also an nfl player by the name of Maurice Jones-Drew fascinates me. I mean he stands at 5'7, 210lbs with excepytionally low bodyfat. My assumptions is that he's either taken steroids and or hgh at some point. However this assumptions of mine seem to not weigh up as most believe he is just genetically gifted. What are your thoughts on hm? (i'm assuming you've heard of him)

**Marc Perry**

December 22, 2011 6:31 pm

any other steroid like supplements. Creatine and other similar types of supplements are allowed generally speaking.

It is possible he took steroids in college, but I wouldn't want to paint him with that brush. I remember I saw this monster guy in the gym who was putting up 225lb on the bench like it was a toothpick. He was probably 6'4" 245 with like 7% body fat. I asked him how the hell he got so jacked, and he just started laughing. It turns out he was a pro football player for the Jets who blew out his knee. He said he took steroids for years and he was now "small" compared to when he was playing. He said that "most" college football players take steroids, but who knows. With all that said, some guys are literally 200lb full of muscle freshman year in college. I mean Maurice Jones-Drew's neck is so huge it's hard to believe. I could do neck bridges for the rest

that yes, I think he has exceptional, one of a kind genetics and was probably pretty huge at a young age.

**roy**

December 31, 2011 6:03 am

Well it seems to be true but i weighed 205 6' @ 10 percent body fat and gaining. i was pretty ripped then i got injured pretty bad and got fat well not obese but packed on some pounds im, now like 18% fat 205 i feel like poop. anyway am i supposed to measure at the ankle joint ,where the ankle bones pop out?also at the wrist where the wrist bones pop out?

**Marc Perry**

January 4, 2012 7:28 pm

@Roy – Sorry to hear you got out of shape from an injury. That's very frustrating.

You should measure that the thinnest cross section of your wrist and ankle, so not over the bones

**Dakota**

January 3, 2012 8:40 pm

Hey Marc my names Dakota, I am 5'11 currently at 185lbs (Major improvement from the 220 I weighed) and I would like to know the best way to build muscle in the chest, shoulders, arms, and abdomins are while reducing the size of my theighs and well butt. I originally lost the previous weight by doing a lot of jogging but now I fear I may have gained muscle in the wrong places. Any dietary or work out advice? I started going to the gym abit but I want to make sure I am doing the right work outs/routines.

**Marc Perry**

January 4, 2012 7:04 pm

@Dakota – Congrats on losing a substantial amount of weight. That's great to hear. I usually recommend that before people attempt to build muscle, you should first get down to 8-10% body fat, so you can reveal your



have more shape. Also, once you are at a lower body fat percentage, you can better assess your physique with measurements etc. So unless you are already down to a low body fat percentage, I would strongly recommend focusing on that first, then worrying about building muscle. I have a ton of articles on this website about losing fat without losing muscle, so definitely search around. I do plan on adding more articles soon about muscle gain specifically. Thanks for the comment and good luck!

**albert**

January 13, 2012 10:38 pm

I like the article but don't agree with the formula at all. I'm 23 and a natural bodybuilder, and i weighed 205 at 7% bodyfat. Either your formula is wrong or im a complete genetic freak.

**Marc Perry**

January 14, 2012 7:09 pm

experience and other websites and natural bodybuilders. I wouldn't call yourself a genetic freak, and if anything, it's a good thing. I for one am jealous you can pack on so much muscle. I've NEVER done a body fat test on a guy under 6 feet who had an LBM above 170lb. Never. But I also don't see too many monster football players here in NYC (but I did in college for sure)!

**Craig**

January 14, 2012 6:16 pm

Marc.

I am 6'4" indicating a LBM of 192lbs in your table.

Last weigh in i was 244 pounds with around a BF% of 20. giving me 195lbs. I have large wrists and ankles so could probably carry more muscle as i do not feel at the peak.

right now i am just trying to get the fat % down to under 10%

January 14, 2012 7:12 pm

@Craig – It sounds like you are a large man and I wouldn't want to get you angry. 195lb is HUGE amount of LBM. I think focusing on losing fat without losing muscle is a very smart idea, because you will actually look even bigger if you lose 20lb of pure fat.

### Mike

January 15, 2012 6:38 am

Ok so, quick question; I am at my maximum muscular body weight according to Casey Butt's mathematical system. While that may be great news to a degree, I am pretty disappointed as it seems I can no longer put on mass. Can I still make strength gains at least? Or at this point am I physically maxed out. What goals could I achieve at this point. Sorry if I don't understand, I'm kind of new to the gym. Nice article btw, I do appreciate it.

### Marc Perry

January 16, 2012 5:36 pm

also created it to show that you don't have to add as much muscle as you probably think to get a VERY strong, lean, muscular physique. Basically, the idea of natural bodybuilders at 5'10" and 200lb ripped simply doesn't exist.

With that said, we don't truly know your maximum muscle potential until you try to hit your strength potential. FYI, your strength can certainly increase without increasing size, which is called neuromuscular efficiency. If you are new to the gym, that I would guess you could substantially increase your strength.

**Joe**

January 16, 2012 7:08 am

Hey Marc,

Love the article just wanted to get a better understanding. Im 6 foot, 170lbs 11-13% body fat. According to the chart, when I hit 171lbs at 6%BF i will reach/be around my max muscle gains.

Im 21 and almost kinda worried that when I do gain the 10lbs of muscle(just a guess) i will reach my max and will no longer see gains. Say i reach my max in a year or two, going to the gym knowing you've reached your max amount of muscle is not something I've thought about. I'm in the gym to see gains and reach my goals. Are you saying in the near future I will be going to the gym for a different reason..not to gain muscle/ strength/ size, but to maybe just maintain the muscle and stay in shape?

Thanks,  
Joe

**Marc Perry**

January 18, 2012 3:47 pm

@Joe – As I stated in some of my other comments, this article was merely supposed to be a guideline to help natural guys realize the difference between natural muscle size, and drug induced results. I don't know and you don't know your maximum muscle potential,

you wrote in your comment, that's your max LBM predicted by the formulas). With that said, I can just about guarantee you there will be a time in your life when you are not constantly trying to get bigger, but may want to lose some more fat, improve your mobility, improve your cardio capacity, or simply want to stay in shape, or maintain the physique you have. You have a long journey ahead of you my friend and I wish you the best of luck!

**Tim**

January 23, 2012 2:37 pm

I'm sure those formulas don't work for short people. I'm 5 foot 5 and I'm sure I can get more lean body mass than 135lb, that's scrawny as hell for bodybuilding! I probably have about that at the moment with a total body weight of 162lb and about 25lb of fat and I do weight train but not seriously

**Marc Perry**

January 24, 2012 7:55 pm

these formulas do not hold up well on the taller and and shorter end of the spectrum. They are built for guys around 5'10-5'11.

**Tim**

January 23, 2012 2:53 pm

135lb lean bodymass is tiny for 5 foot 5. I'm probably at that now, as an occasional weight trainer, although I also have 25lbs or so of fat on top of that.

**James Barclay**

January 28, 2012 11:31 am

Hi Marc,

Just a couple of thoughts I'd like to throw out there regarding how much (most) people can gain naturally and get a bit feedback from yourself and others about your opinions. Firstly can I just point out that I for one completely agree with the above guide on what the typical max ripped & LBM most of us can achieve although I know a LOT of guys who would argue that it is

most people can't get their head round the fact that a 5' 10" man who is 171 pounds with a very low body fat is in fact huge, that's surely because a lot of people don't understand that there's a bit of a trade off going on in the sense that being ripped means losing a lot of "fat weight" and in turn replacing that weight with muscle and then subsequently adding more weight on top with more muscle to achieve those above guideline figures. I think a lot of us (myself included) become a bit overwhelmed by the truth that there's a lot of fat to be shed before starting to build muscle and the loss of that fat leaves most of us with a figure which we simply aren't happy with. For example the gym I train at has most of the people training within it standing at say an average of 5' 10" 168 pounds and a body fat percentage in the high teens. When those people look in the mirror they tend to think they are mostly muscle while being oblivious to the fact they are carrying a lot of fat as they are generally pretty strong and are simply not happy with the reality of



there. I routinely see these guys on crunch machines and doing endless sit ups believing they are a couple of weeks away from a prominent 6 pack. These guys invariably underestimate their body fat percentage which is a shame because knowledge is power and if only they'd realise this, their progress would be somewhat faster and extremely revealing should they listen to the tips I have found here on HIIT and excellent nutrition.

Secondly I have noticed that there are a lot of websites out there which state we can pack on 20-30 pounds of muscle in a year naturally? How can they come up with those figures and why do they exploit young gym enthusiasts by setting these unreasonable/unachievable goals?! I personally believe, and I think you would agree, that the most amount of muscle (most) of us can put on inside a year assuming excellent nutrition and good solid sensible workouts would sit at around 7 pounds (ish). I've scrutinised numbers for quite some

through what I've witnessed from others. Don't get me wrong, there are always exceptions to the rules and I have also seen some guys who seem to have superior genes that can exceed these figures as you have already pointed out in the past. Going by your realistic figures Marc it would appear that a lot of us would reach our genetic potential within a few years of committed training and nutrition which to me sounds about right, whereas these other websites are more or less indicating reaching the height of our genetic potential inside a year or 2! That just doesn't stack up for me so I'm not buying it, so just to let you know I'm happy to have this website to refer to every now and then for educated advice and I'm sure most others who visit your website feel the same, all in all good job! Any advice or thoughts on this from yourself or others would be welcomed, and just so the readers know, I'm not looking to offend anyone who doesn't necessarily agree with the guide above or even my thoughts, that's just my opinion and I appreciate

Just for the record I'm standing 160 pounds at 5' 10" with 14% body fat so I have a bit of work to do initially in losing approximately 7-8 pounds of fat to get to single digit percentage of body fat and then work on putting on about 15 pounds of lean muscle to reach my ultimate goal of 168 pounds. I know this will take some time but it's better knowing that it will indeed take a significant period to get me there than to be fooled into thinking it can happen overnight which would undoubtedly result in complete failure which sadly is the case for a lot of people out there. All the best to everyone training hard, be patient I say, we can all see on Marc's site how the transformations can be realised.

Regards

James

**Marc Perry**

January 28, 2012 11:33 pm

everything you said and I wish you luck on your journey to reaching your ideal physique. I plan on adding a lot more helpful articles to BuiltLean in the coming months, so I look forward to your participation.

**Adon**

February 1, 2012 1:31 pm

Are you kidding me?

I am 5'8 and weighing 163 lbs with 10%bodyfat and i even started lifting weights 1 month ago! so does it mean, that i won't gain that much muscle anymore? doesnt make sense.

**Marc Perry**

February 2, 2012 6:41 pm

@Adon – As I've mentioned in previous comments, this is simply a guide. You don't know how much muscle you can build until you try. The main point of the article was to highlight the unrealistic expectations of a lot of guys who have a misinformed belief they need to weigh 190lb when ripped

unusual for a guy to be 190lb and ripped who doesn't take steroids, or some type of steroid like supplement.

**Kyle Michaud**

February 3, 2012 5:52 pm

I'm interested in competing. I am natural 5 foot 5 and 150 at 12 percent body fat so currently my lbm is 131.7. I'm turning twenty soon and I don't believe my lbm will stop anywhere near 135. What should I do about competitions. I have very decent measurements. My only problem is my right tricep is smaller than my left

**Marc Perry**

February 5, 2012 12:21 pm

@Kyle Michaud – Don't understand your question. What do you mean by, "what should I do about competing?"

**Joey**

February 5, 2012 7:06 pm

I've come to the same conclusion as you about too much muscle and it being tough on your heart. I'm interested in seeing an article about that. My weight fluctuates between 5'10" 175ish when I'm at my highest strength (more just seems to turn to fat if I add weight to my frame even though I can lift a little bit heavier) and 165 when I am more running-distance trained. I'm currently just trying to focus on a strength:mass ratio, which is why I've taken an interest in gymnastics as an adult. It's quite a challenge to learn now (I'm obviously not doing anything too dangerous too soon, but just working on a planche and I already have a solid balanced handstand easily). I personally don't think that running extreme distances is healthy for your body either (ie ones where you're supposed to supplement carbohydrate to prolong your exercise time).

**Marc Perry, CSCS, CPT**

February 7, 2012 6:42 pm

**Clayton**

February 6, 2012 6:06 pm

Marc,

I appreciate the article. But almost every estimation I have looked at for natural muscularity limits puts me right at or above my supposed natural limits. I am a hair shy of 5'11" and just over 220lbs at 17% body fat. But I would not consider myself huge... more like a healthy athletic (slightly more muscular than average) build. I am natural (no pro-hormones either) and I'm sure that I could probably add another 10-15lbs of muscle to my frame naturally before hitting my limit.

**Marc Perry, CSCS, CPT**

February 6, 2012 10:15 pm

@Clayton – I'm jealous. Another factor/limitation with these models excluding the Casey Butts model is that some people have much wider/more dense bone structures. Sounds like you are in this camp. If you take a guy is 5'11" with a

that will create a significant difference in maximum muscle potential.

**Kyle Michaud**

February 6, 2012 9:06 pm

Like what competitions should I enter and how could I even up my arms. Its only 16 and 15.5 but it looks like its all tricep. I'll be twenty soon so I can't enter a teen competition. I feel I might make it far in the business seeing my age and measurements and I'd like to know where to start please and thank you

**Marc Perry, CSCS, CPT**

February 14, 2012 9:31 am

@Kyle Michaud – What specific competitions to look into is out of my realm because I've never competed myself. If you are natural (which I hope), then check out the World Natural Bodybuilding Federation (WNBF). Your arms are not majorly out of proportion at 0.5 inches difference and your arm



work, that could be your best option. You can also measure the surface area of your triceps/biceps and see if you can more specifically identify the reason why one arm is smaller than the other, than address the difference.

### **Eldin**

February 9, 2012 3:08 am

Hey man that was a good article, im 5'8 160 pounds about 13 percent body fat. Ive been lifting for about 8 months now and ive never lifted before that. When I first started lifting I was 135 pounds and around 8 to 10 percent body fat. During that time period I didn't really focus on my legs to much, I rarely did squats and deadlifts. I was lifting 5 to 6 days a week doing just about everything in the gym. I just started doing squats and deadlifts and I found out I can do more then I thought. I deadlift 250 and squat 235. My goal is to get up to 170, just wondering by focusing on my legs more will this add that 10 pounds that I want.

February 10, 2012 10:21 pm

@Eldin – I think focusing on your legs is a VERY smart strategy to help gain muscle because (1) you can pack on a lot of muscle mass on your legs, (2) it can help increase your testosterone and other muscle building hormones and (3) your upper body can get stronger from a strong lower body (sounds strange, but it's true).

Comments are closed.

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