

Nordic walking a low impact workout



Nordic walking a low impact workout. Nicole Hourahine does some Nordic walking is a great way to help Cambridge become Canada' most active city. *photo submitted*
Nicole Hourhine, Special to the Times

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Recently, I was approached by an old friend who had fallen out of her fitness routine due to health complications from an injury (and lack of motivation); she had gone from advanced exerciser (kickboxing, jogging, soccer star) to being limited to very low level of activity (walking her dog around the block a few times per week).

Not exercising at a high frequency and intensity, she had begun to gain weight, and lose confidence in herself. Walking is a great low impact exercise with many health benefits, but for many people, it's just not enough, so I suggested, "how about Nordic walking?" and she, looking confused, asked, "What the heck is that?"

Nordic walking, or walking with poles, originated in Norway as a method of training for skiers in the offseason. Walking with the poles reduces stress on the hip knee and ankle joints, and can be performed year round. When you add poles into the mix, you also add upper body and core conditioning to your walk. Other health benefits include: increased upper body strength and endurance, higher energy consumption by almost 50 per cent (burning more calories), better flexibility in the neck and shoulders, and increased bone density.

In order to maximize your workout, there is some technique involved. Hold the poles in a loose grip while pushing off the ground, keeping the poles behind you. Walk with opposite foot to poles, striking the ground firmly in front of you, then pushing back

to propel yourself forward. Keeping your abdominals engaged, and correct posture will help to condition your core.

Nordic walking is easy, fun, and almost anyone can do it. Poles can be purchased at any sports store from as little as \$19.99 per pair. In order to enjoy your walk, dress appropriately for the weather (making sure to wear warm gloves in the cold).

My friend was skeptical at first, but once she tried Nordic walking, she was hooked. Now I often see her out and around the streets and trails of Cambridge walking with her poles, seeing the sights, and getting healthy and active. If you would like more information on Nordic walking, visit activecambridge.ca.

What's your story? Share your experiences online and support Cambridge's bid to become Canada's Most Active City through the CBC's Live Right Now campaign. Courtesy of Active Cambridge

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