

FOREVER ACTIVE

PERSONALIZED FITNESS AND WELLNESS FOR MEN 50 +

Nordic Pole and Hill Walking



Introduction

Walking is one of the simplest, safest, cheapest and most convenient ways of getting cardio vascular exercise. One of the basic concepts in exercise is that the more muscle groups you involve in a particular exercise the greater the intensity of the exercise, and the greater the cardio vascular benefit you will achieved. This newsletter will look at two different ways that you can safely and easily modify basic walking to increase the intensity of your exercise so you will receive the maximum possible benefit and make the most efficient use of your exercise time.

Nordic Pole Walking

Nordic pole walking is a total body version of walking that uses specially designed poles to engage the upper body in the walking movement. Nordic pole walking involves applying force to the poles with each stride and as a result use more of their entire body. The upper body, in particular, the chest, lats, triceps, biceps, shoulder, abdominals, spinal and other core muscles receive fitness building stimulation not present in normal walking. The use of more muscles groups results in a significant increase in heart rate at a given pace. Nordic pole walking has been estimated to produce up to a 46% increase in energy consumption, compared to walking without poles. Using Nordic poles instead of simply walking reduces stress to your knees and lower joints, provides additional stability in poor weather and on uneven terrain and offers critical support for individuals who are poorly trained, elderly or are compromised physically.



The Poles

Nordic walking poles come in one-piece, non-adjustable shaft versions, available in varying lengths, and telescoping two-or three-piece twist-locking versions of adjustable length. They typically come with removable rubber tips for use on hard surfaces such as roads and sidewalks and hardened metal tips for trails, the beach, snow, and ice. Most poles are made from lightweight aluminium, carbon fiber, or composite materials.

Getting the Proper Pole Size

Picking the proper size of walking poles is vitally important. If the poles are too short or too long, additional stress will be put on your wrists, elbows and shoulders; you will have a tendency to walk slightly hunched over or overly upright if they are too short or too long, and this will put added stress on your lower back and hips. Use the chart in the section titled “Did You Know” as a general guide to select the correct pole length for your particular height.

Did You Know

Getting Fitted Properly

Rule of Thumb:

When you grip the handles and the poles are vertical in front of you, your wrists should be slightly lower than your elbows.

Body Height	Pole Height
6' 3" - 6' 5"	135 cm
6' 0" - 6' 2"	130 cm
5' 9" - 5' 11"	125 cm
5' 6" - 5' 8"	120 cm
5' 3" - 5' 5"	115 cm
5' 1" - 5' 2"	110 cm
4' 10" - 5' 0"	105 cm

Walking Technique to using Nordic Poles Properly

- The cadences of the arms, legs and body should be rhythmically speaking, similar to those used in normal, vigorous, walking.
- Your range of arm movement will regulate the length of your stride.
- Restricted arm movements with Nordic poles results in a restricted pelvic motion and stride length.
- The longer the pole thrust, the longer the stride and more powerful the swing of the pelvis and upper torso will be.

Instructional Video

Please copy the link below to your browser for an excellent instructional video on sizing and walking techniques using Nordic Poles:

Nordic Pole Walking Illustrated



Hill Walking Technique

Going Up

- Lean slightly forward and use an arm swing that's relaxed and perhaps a little more forceful than usual, but not over-exaggerated.
- Take a shorter stride, and lift your knees no higher than 6 inches off the ground as you stride forward
- As you climb, aim to keep your walking intensity on par with the rest of your workout. To gauge this, do the simple talk test: If you can carry on a conversation, you're walking at the right pace.

Going Down

Surprisingly, you're most likely to be injured when walking *down* a hill: because you hit the ground harder, the stress and impact of each step on your joints and muscles are multiplied. Knee injuries and quadriceps strains are the most common pitfalls of poor downhill form.

- Walk in a relaxed glide : take small, fast steps, letting each foot strike flow smoothly into the next.
- Don't try to fight gravity by leaning back and putting on the brakes. Lean forward slightly so that your torso stays perpendicular to the road surface.
- If the downhill is very steep, use a technique called switchbacking, in which you snake from side to side across a hill. It's best to steer clear of extreme slopes, because they create additional stress on your joints and muscles.

Hill Walking

Many walkers shy away from hill walking thinking, incorrectly, that it is too difficult or that they will hurt themselves. Hill walking is definitely more challenging than just walking on a level surface and should be done only after you have developed a strong base of conditioning; however, if done with good technique and with a gradual increase in number of reps and intensity the benefits of hill walking/training are many. They include achieving a higher level of cardio vascular training, increasing your caloric expenditure in your time spent walking, strengthening of the of your legs, hips and core musculature, and increasing your confidence that you can conquer any hill that comes your way.



Treadmill vs Outdoor Hills

Using the treadmill to simulate hills is fine if you do not have access to hills, but it also puts a lot more stress on your muscles because it does not allow you to use the leg, hip and core muscle groups in an alternative way by walking downhill. If you do use a treadmill, progress slowly; start at 2 % grade and each week, increase the grade, at the most, by .5 to 1% to a maximum grade of 7 % .

Intensity and Reps

When you start walking hills as a way of increasing your level of fitness, start slowly. Walking up and down hills puts a different type of stress on your lower limb musculature than walking on level ground and your body will need time to adapt to it. Try to pick hills that are no longer than 400 meters, and walk up and down them slowly at first. You can increase the speed and intensity at which you walk as your level of fitness improves and your muscle adapt. Start by doing only two hills and increase this number by one every week to a total of ten. If you feel particular tired do the same number of hills as the previous week, decrease the number of reps you do or don't do any hills at all. Because hill walking is a more intense activity than typical walking it is important to listen to your body and know when to give it time to rest and recover. Remember, it is during your recovery time that your muscles strengthen, grow and adapt.