

## **NORDIC WALKING - THE FINNISH WAY**

### **History of Nordic Walking**

Nordic Walking is one of the fastest growing recreational fitness sports in the world and has its roots already in the early 1930 in Finland as an off season training method of the competitive crosscountry skiers. Development of Nordic Walking to its present form as a recreational physical activity for all started in early 1980 in Finland and in 1997 the first official Nordic Walker poles were introduced to the public by one of the world's largest pole manufacturer, Exel plc. Estimated population of Nordic Walkers at the end of the year 2005 was over 5 million.



### **What is Nordic Walking?**

Nordic Walking is fitness walking with specially designed Nordic Walker poles to engage also the upper body during walking. It offers a very efficient, aerobic and easy way to improve your physical condition irrespective of age, sex or physical condition. Nordic Walking can be up to 46% more efficient than regular walking (Cooper Institute Research 2000) depending on the intensity of the exercise.



## Nordic Walking Techniques

1. Walk naturally
2. Keep your shoulders relaxed and do not hold the grip too strenuous
3. Hands and poles remain close to the body
4. Keep in mind that the poles remain in a diagonal position
5. As the left foot moves forward so does the right hand in unison
6. Try to make the pole push just behind the line with the pelvis
7. Open the palm of the hands at the end of the pole push
8. Bring the pole quickly forward again
9. Mind that body is pointing forward in one line
10. Make sure you achieve the total unrolling of the feet from heel to toes



Nordic Walking should be trained in relatively long periods. Exercising periods should be i.e. between 60-90 minutes at a time. The pace should be steady and the heart rate should rise up to 65-85% age predictive heart rate. Warm-up and cool-down should be an integral part of each training session.

## Health Facts

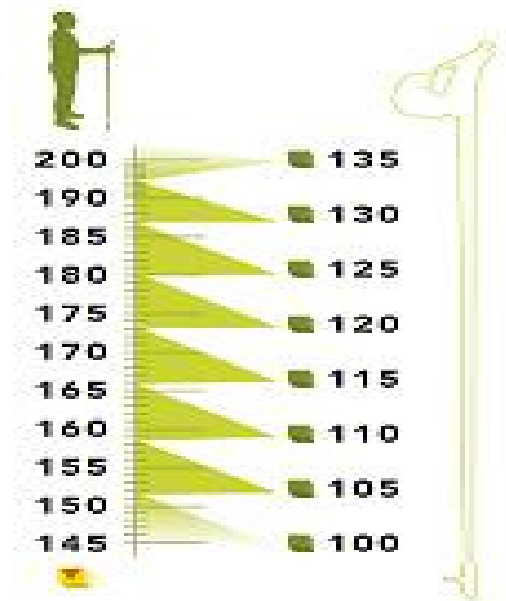
Heart rate is 5-17 beats per minute higher (for example in normal walking heart rate is 130 beats/minute and in Nordic Walking 147 beats per minute i.e. increase is 13%) Energy consumption increases when using poles by an average of 20% compared with ordinary walking without poles. Releases pain and muscle tension in the neck/shoulder region The lateral mobility of the neck and spine increases significantly The muscles most actively involved are the forearm extensor and flexor muscles, the rear part of the shoulder muscles, the large pectoral muscles and the broad back muscles. Does not aggravate joints and knees. Reduces the load on knees and other joints. Consumes approximately 400 calories per hour (compared with 280 calories per hour for normal walking). Poles are a safety factor on slippery surfaces.

## Nordic Walking poles

Correct Nordic Walking technique is best achieved with equipment designed specifically for Nordic Walking. Appropriate equipment helps you to achieve optimal benefits and avoid injuries.

When you are choosing Nordic walking poles you must remember these things:

- Interchangeable and correctly angled spike tip
- Asphalt paw for improved grip and shock absorption
- Durable and light composite shafts
- Ergonomically designed grips and interchangeable grip system
- Specifically designed strap offering outstanding power transfer and support



To choose your pole length you can use the formula:

Your height x 0.68 (round it to the nearest lower 5 cm). Remember to check that your elbow should be maximum 90 degrees angle, when held by the grip with the tip on the ground.

Other important factors to consider when choosing pole length are level of fitness, joint mobility, proportions of limbs, walking speed, length of stride, long term goals, skills and terrain.