

NORDIC WALKING

Nordic Walking was invented in 1933 in Finland, when it was found that Cross Country Skiers were more fit in Summer than in Winter. They were using their ski poles to traverse land with no snow, walking instead of skiing, and their muscles and cardio vascular rates improved. We now use redesigned poles to walk today.

Since then, much research has been done, and it is now one of the most popular recreational sports of our time, allowing people of all levels of fitness and ages to take part. In Germany it is now on prescription, and all their tracks and paths have signs for Nordic walking, along with Walking and Cycling.

Nordic Walking uses 90% of the bodies muscles, retraining lazy and neglected muscles, whilst improving heart rate, balance, bladder control, weight loss, and stamina. It also takes about one third of the pressure from joints such as hip, knee and ankle, whilst gently rotating the shoulders and lower back, freeing up tensions. In ladies the core muscles are toned, and in men a tightening of the beer belly can be felt. In all cases, once the technique is learned, and if the person is fit enough to walk at a raised level, he will lose approximately 20% more calories than by doing normal walking.

Because it is performed outside in the fresh air, with other people, there is also a *feel good* factor as a bonus to the exercise. Walkers can chat and enjoy the scenery, whilst improving their fitness.

It is suggested that if taken up in your 60 s, a person will be walking a good 10 years longer than they would have been, providing other health aspects hold up. Using the special lightweight poles, (provided during classes), older people can enjoy a new stability, giving them the confidence to walk at a good pace, without the fear of falling. The poles are strapped on, even allowing arthritis sufferers to take part.

This versatile way of walking, also has the benefit of allowing mixed fitness groups to walk together. For example, a fit 30 year old, can walk alongside a less fit or older person, and both will attain the level of fitness they want to achieve. This is because the upper body takes a big part in helping the poles propel you forward, so the fitter person, will put in more effort, gain greater cardio vascular function, whilst his legs will walk at the pace of his less fit neighbour.

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