

Smart Walking Seniors!

Submitted by Sheri Simson



Walking with poles gives you a wonderfully tall feeling - naturally aligning your spine and strengthening your core while engaging over 50 per cent more muscles...

I was 42 years old and had recently transformed my overweight and out-of-shape body and lost 30 lbs (in just 6 months) by using walking poles - yet I was confused and hurt. Everyone that I had told about this "secret" European fitness phenomenon found it interesting but wouldn't consider it for themselves. For some reason though, they couldn't wait to tell their Moms or Dads about it.

It was, and still is, amazing to me how a cross-training exercise for Olympic cross-country ski athletes can be seen as an activity only for old or injured people?

It's surprising how many people out there let this stigma stop them from even giving walking poles a try. I've even had seniors over the age of 80 say, "I don't need help walking." Well, I can assure you, Olympic cross-country ski athletes certainly don't either.

Pole walking originated in 1930s, when the cross-country ski coaches of Finland were struggling to keep their athletes in peak performance during the off season.

Pole walking (also known as Nordic Walking) isn't new - it's just relatively new to North America. So it is understandable that it is still seen as a mystery to many why anyone would want to walk around with a pair of poles (resembling ski poles) in their hands, without skis strapped to their feet or snow on the ground.

Though Pole walking is literally for everyone from the casual, average walker to the more serious, athletic walker - the people who seem to be most instantly and naturally attracted to it are 55 to 75 year olds (with a large amount of happy, healthy 75 to 98 year olds as well).

I think the reason for this is that most people in this age category already love to walk. They walk socially, for fun and for exercise, so adding poles simply makes sense. Plus once they find out that using poles makes walking more beneficial (increasing their cardio by 20 per cent and calorie burn by up to 48 per cent) and that it actually takes less effort to do and is easier on their bodies (lessening the impact with which they hit the ground by 26 per cent - a huge bonus if you have any back, hip, knee, ankle or feet challenges) - then it's not surprising they are excited and can't wait to get going.

Walking with poles gives you a wonderfully tall feeling - naturally aligning your spine and strengthening your core while engaging over 50 per cent more muscles than if you were walking without poles. This in particular helps burn the unwanted back-fat and floppy-arms that all mature women hate!

It's funny how this professional athletic cross-training exercise is seen as an activity for old or injured people. Well, I say, "too bad," for those younger people who don't realize that it isn't and, "way to go" for those lucky, open minded, older (smart) folks who are willing to give it a try! Walk - on everyone!



SHERI SIMSON, aka the Pole Lady is a 'Pole Walking Enthusiast' and a 'Health & Fitness Ambassador.' Check out www.keenfit.com or call 250-769-9241.