

Supercharge your walking routine

As you know, I am a huge advocate of daily exercise, and one of my favorite ways to get my fair share is to go walking. Not only is this a great way for us to spend some time together, but walking provides head-to-toe benefits.

Recently, while I was in a larger city, I noticed people walking around a park, holding something that looks like ski poles. "Where's the snow?" I wondered. I have to admit, I wasn't quite sure



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what to think the first time I saw someone using walking poles. So of course I had to investigate, and I was impressed with the research I found.

Pole walking stems from the sport of cross country skiing. It is believed to have originated as far back as the 1930s, when ski coaches in Finland were struggling to keep their athletes in peak performance during the off season. Once the total body benefits of pole walking were discovered, it became a popular sport.

In fact, pole walking is actually one of the most beneficial and rewarding activities you'll ever do. And it's great for weight loss. It's a rhythmically energizing form of walking with a specially designed pair of poles to help you (with less effort) incorporate your entire body rather than just your lower half. And like cross country skiing, the poles are used by your arms to match each step you take.

In a study of 32 healthy men and women walking with poles, there was an average 23 percent higher oxygen uptake or increased lung capacity and a 16 percent higher heart rate (both are indicators of cardiovascular health) compared to those walking without poles. Higher oxygen uptake and heart rate is good for improving

your cardiovascular health and fitness.

In the same study there was also an average 22 percent higher calorie burn, which will help you easily shed any extra pounds. There is no doubt that pole walking is beneficial for your overall health in addition to boosting your cardio and increasing the amount of calories you burn, pole walking increases muscle endurance, helps improve your stability and increases your energy levels. Let me explain.

Pole walking can turn a simple walk around the block into an effective, cardio workout. That's because the arm movement you use with the poles increases your heart rate without increasing your perceived rate of exertion. So you'll get a much better workout, and burn more calories without feeling like you're working any harder. In fact, research suggests that 30 minutes of pole walking is equal to 50 minutes of walking without poles.

Now, you might find this hard to believe, but you actually use less than 50 percent of your major muscles when you walk without poles but over 90 percent of your muscles when using poles. So it's fair to say that walking with poles helps build muscle endurance. Your arms, shoulders, upper chest and back muscles go through a full range of motion, which stretches and lengthens muscles that are often tight from sitting at a computer, reading or watching television.

Pole walking also works wonders for balance and stability. If you practice Pilates or yoga, you can get many of the same benefits in a 30 minute pole workout. These poles will give you more assistance so you'll feel stable

and balanced, which takes stress off your lower joints. This can be especially helpful if you suffer from knee or leg discomfort.

Pole walking also is great for your posture. With each step it helps to align your spine and strengthen your core. Strengthening the core also helps support your back so you'll sit and stand taller. Best of all, your entire body will feel fantastic and your overall energy will soar.

Since pole walking has become so popular, you can purchase walking poles in almost any sporting goods store. But you have to be careful: not all poles are created equal. Your key considerations should be weight, adjustability, construction and ergonomic grip. A great Web site to go to is www.keenfit.com. Their poles are great for about \$65.

Pole walking is simple to master. My best advice is to read the easy-to-follow instructions and you'll start striding along in no time. Once you develop a rhythm, your whole body will feel relaxed and energized.

I can't stress enough how rewarding pole walking is for your overall health. It's one of the easiest forms of exercise that increases your heart rate so you'll burn more calories, builds muscle strength and endurance and improves your stability and balance. Plus, you'll love how much extra energy you'll have. Until next time, all the best, in health and life.

DR. CHARLES SUBER is a local chiropractor. He may be reached at 433-7611 or Drsuber.com. This article offers general dietary guidelines and is not meant to diagnose, treat or cure any disease. Please consult with your doctor before making any changes in your diet.