



### Nordic Pole Walking – A Better Option For Veterans On The Move

Why? Every physical safety brief stresses “3 points of contact.” As we age, we accumulate injuries and balance issues. “3 points of contact” reduces risk, keeping us safely active. Nordic Pole Walking reduces impact on feet, knees, hips and back. It uses more muscles by involving the upper body and our “core.” It burns more calories and uses more muscles-making us stronger and improving our stability. These increased benefits strengthen the heart more effectively and efficiently than regular walking.

Nordic walking has been around for hundreds of years. It is used world wide for fitness and as safer way to increase mobility. “Walking with poles has been shown to boost calorie burn by an average of 15%-20% and even 50% as compared with regular walking “(cited from Prevention Mag Sept 9, 2015).

How to start? Get the gear! WVI recommends “Cascade Mountain Tech Carbon Fiber Quick Lock Trekking Poles” because of the safer locking feature and the many accessories. They can be found for \$47.95 on Amazon Prime.

You can also buy a good set of poles for around \$100 in stores like REI or Sports Authority. You're best off using poles that are designed specifically for Nordic walking. You can choose between adjustable and nonadjustable models. The adjustable versions store easily and fit more than one user; the nonadjustable models are generally lighter and won't accidentally collapse on you. If using an adjustable pole-always check that the adjustment is tight and secure. If buying online, [nordicwalker.com](http://nordicwalker.com) has a chart that suggests pole height based on your height. If you're a beginner and between sizes, go with the shorter model — you'll move more fluidly.

Nordic walking has finally become a hit in the United States. Participation is growing rapidly as more classes pop up across the country and as companies promote the workout to nonathletic types. To locate an instructor near you, log on to [nordicwalker.com](http://nordicwalker.com) or [leki.com](http://leki.com). And to watch the technique in action, visit [exerstrider.com](http://exerstrider.com). WVI has also made an instruction video found on their website [www.womenveteransinitiative.com](http://www.womenveteransinitiative.com) in the “Toolkits” section.



### Starting Nordic Pole Walking

Instructional Method (carry, drag, plant, push).

- 1 First, you carry.** Hold a pole in each hand, grasping it lightly. Walk with the poles alongside you, letting arms swing in natural opposition to your legs (i.e., your left arm and right foot move in tandem). Do this for several minutes, until it feels natural.
- 2 Then, you drag.** Strap on the poles. As you walk, open the hands and let the poles drag behind you. (You'll skip this step once you move on.) Notice how the poles angle back behind you. The hand goes inside the strap so the poles can be released!
- 3 Next, you plant.** Plant the poles on the ground, rather than dragging them. Lightly hold the grips and keep the poles angled at about 45 degrees backward. Hold elbows close to the body with arms straight but relaxed. Focus on making good contact with the ground.
- 4 Then, you push.** As you get more comfortable, push the poles backward with each step, applying force through the strap. Push your arm past the hip, opening up your hand at the end of the arm swing. As each arm comes forward, pretend you're reaching forward to shake someone's hand.
- 5 Finally, perfect it!** To maximize your benefits, tweak your form. Roll from your heels through to your toes. Relax your ankles. Maintain good posture and lean forward from your ankles. Try lengthening your stride to get a fuller arm swing.