

EXERPHILE

Pole position

Urban poling eliminates excuses in fitness quest

PETE ESTA BROOKS
FOR THE CALGARY HERALD

I am not normally a walker or a hiker. My tendency is to lace up my shoes and run. So when someone suggested walking with ski poles as a workout, I smirked. But, once again, I was wrong.

What is it?

Urban poling, or exer-striding, is simply walking with ski poles. Not regular ski poles, mind you, but ergonomically correct poles. They are height adjustable, feature handles that are easy to grip and distribute weight evenly through the hand and wrist, and come equipped with rubber or spiked tips to accommodate all weather conditions.

Contrary to what I thought, using the poles increased the intensity of my workout. Once I mastered the opposing arm/leg action and stopped looking like a drunken man wandering the bike path in fights, I recognized the opportunity for a serious workout by engaging my abs and driving hard with my shoulders and arms.

As I clicked with the technique, I had an epiphany: Poles are a ticket to freedom for my 80-year-old father. He's had one knee replaced and is a little iffy on the second but loves physical activity. These poles provide the confidence and balance he needs to stay active. For that reason alone I am giving urban poling a thumbs-up.

Who would this appeal to?

The real value in these poles is that they provide confidence and support for people in the initial stages of their fitness



Ted Jacob, Calgary Herald

Pete Estabrooks gets tips from instructor Mandy Shintani on how to get a serious workout from urban poling.

quest. It's the old walk-a-block technique. Walk a block every day this week, two blocks every day next week, and three blocks a day the following week. Keep it up until you are walking an hour a day. Once you are walking an hour a day, start using that upper body and push hard.

You have poles for support, poles for stability and no more excuses.

Who would hate it?

Those who like excuses.

What do you need?

Grab a pair of power walking poles, tie on a pair of good walking shoes and hit the nearest path.

Where do I find it?

See www.urbanpoling.com, which sells the equipment

online, or try Signature Medicine Centre Pharmacy (224 1919 Simcoo Dr. SW, 403-240-4141). If you feel safer learning the program in a class setting, contact a local Good Life Fitness Club (www.goodlifefitness.com).

What are the costs?

Poles cost \$99.99 to \$109.99 a pair. Urban poling's fitness training program, instructional DVD and manual is an additional \$55.

Bottom line?

These poles can provide the security and confidence necessary to begin a fitness lifestyle. Beautiful.

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