

# a walk on the nordic side

by Carol Plotkin



**What could be better than taking a walk outside?** Your lungs are filled with fresh air, you're enjoying a beautiful day, perhaps the company of a friend, and you're exercising your body. Have you heard about Nordic walking? Nordic walking has been practiced by cross country skiers for years, but most recently has become a form of fitness walking that anyone can practice.

Nordic walking is done with modified ski poles. The poles are shorter than regular ski poles and enclose the hand to allow for a special walking technique. In addition to being heckled about the lack of snow, you may wonder why in the world one would want to walk with poles. The reason is that Nordic walking is higher-octane walking; however, it doesn't feel any harder than regular walking.

Research shows that Nordic walking can burn 20-46% more calories than basic walking without a feeling that you're working any harder. A typical hour of walking burns an average of 280 calories; an hour of Nordic walking burns about 400 calories. There are also added benefits, such as increasing overall body strength and tone, since the poles engage the upper body. The poles also support joints by taking on 20-30% of the shock that typically goes to the knees, hips, and back. This is beneficial for those who suffer from arthritis or injuries that limit movement or prevent moving without pain.

Nordic walking programs can be tailored for the novice walker, the elite athlete, and everyone in between. It's an excellent exercise activity for pregnant women, as the poles help adjust for the change in a woman's center of gravity as her belly expands, taking some stress off of her joints. Medical clearance should be given before beginning any exercise program, especially for high-risk populations.

**Nordic walking poles are specific for Nordic walking and are not to be confused with ski poles or trekking poles** (which are designed for support while climbing). The tips of the pole can be covered by asphalt "paws" for use on roads and sidewalks, or the paws can be removed to utilize the pointed tips for off-road use. The poles provide stability on unsteady ground surfaces.

Malin Svensson, an Exel Master Coach and President of Nordic Walking USA says "With Nordic Walking you can get a full body workout starting right outside your door. You don't even have to get into the car to drive to exercise!" Nordic Walking USA's website is an excellent source for information about the sport, and Exel is one of the major manufacturers of Nordic walking equipment. The website is at [www.nordicwalking.com](http://www.nordicwalking.com).

The only known hazard of Nordic walking is braving the comments about the lack of snow or skis. So go ahead and take a walk on the Nordic side!

## ROCHESTER RESOURCE

For more information about Nordic walking programs in the Rochester area, contact Carol Plotkin at (585) 781-0988.

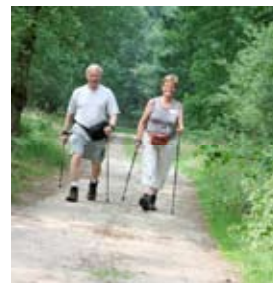
## ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND OUR

**COVER MODEL:** Carol Plotkin, MS,RD, who graces the magazine's cover this month, is a registered dietitian. She is owner of ON NUTRITION, a nutrition practice specializing in wellness/disease prevention and sports nutrition. She is also an Exel trained Level 2 Nordic walking instructor. To find out more about her services, go to [www.rochesternutrition.com](http://www.rochesternutrition.com). Contact her at [cplotkin@rochesternutrition.com](mailto:cplotkin@rochesternutrition.com).



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**Limited Seating.**

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