

# Sports

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## POLE POSITION



Maria Rantanen/TIMES

Personal trainer Mari-Ann Drevvatne, her husband Sean O'Shea and Harp Purewal walk along the dikes in Pitt Meadows using Nordic poles, which help walkers burn up to 40 per cent more calories.

### Maria Rantanen

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Mari-Ann Drevvatne is dressed in black army surplus gear with an Adventure Bootcamp dogtag hanging around her neck – it's her new look this year, she says, and it fits well with the militaristic reputation that bootcamp fitness clubs have.

But the natural bodybuilding, certified personal trainer and fitness bootcamp general has a new fitness regime that is kinder and gentler to the body, which she launched in Pitt Meadows this week.

Nordic walking – which looks like cross-country skiing without the skis – is already a fitness phenomenon in her native county of Norway.

Three years ago when she was home for a visit, she saw people taking long walks using two poles. The Nordic walking craze had already been spread throughout Scandinavia – Finland is famous for having half a million Nordic walkers, which is 10 per cent of the population.

When Drevvatne picked up a pair of poles, she could tell this was something that could help get people into shape in her adopted country.

The Nordic poles strap onto the walker's wrists, and look like they're being dragged behind the walker.

But like a cross-country skier, the poles stay in the back and propel the walker forward, taking pressure off the back and knees by using the calf muscles instead.

"It's very gentle on the body," Drevvatne said. "It takes the workout to the next level – a total body workout."

Nordic walking reduces stress to the knees and back, and strengthens cardiovascular endurance while burning 40 per cent more calories than regular walking.

Using the poles to push oneself along lessens the strike of the foot in the ground and those with tender feet can walk longer distances, Drevvatne said.

In addition, oxygen intake is increased by 25 per cent while the walker's posture improves.

The first time Drevvatne went out in Pitt Meadows with her Nordic walking poles, people asked her "What are you doing? You forgot your skis."

They weren't far from the truth as Nordic walking began with cross-country skiers training off-season. Elite skiers in Scandinavia need to keep training even during those short months when there is no snow.

Already in the 80s, Olympic skiers were spotted on the highways on roller skis with ski poles during the summer months.

Some people run with poles and others go Nor-

dic blading with rollerblades, Drevvatne said.

Drevvatne launched her Adventure Nordic Club in Pitt Meadows this week and she hopes it will eventually expand into Maple Ridge and around the Lower Mainland.

But the fitness benefits are only half of the story – Nordic walking is a social event, Drevvatne said, where large groups meet and get fit together while building friendships.

Drevvatne will start her Adventure Nordic Club on Wednesday evening.

She will rent poles for \$9.95 per session, which includes initial instruction, or four sessions for \$29.95.

Drevvatne is also selling poles, whereby the walking club will be free. The poles are made by the German manufacturer Leki and have a lifetime warranty.

The poles are made of aircraft aluminum and have rubber tips for pavement, and carbide tips for walking on gravel, grass and other uneven surfaces. The price of the poles varies from \$100 to \$200.

However, she does recommend Nordic walkers take lessons for \$9.95 to learn the correct technique.

Contact Drevvatne at 787-7738 to reserve a space and for more information about her Adventure Nordic Club – where and at what time they meet.