

Fit on Foot – Technical Travel Bulletin - Pole Assisted Walking – Essential Tremor.



This module details the techniques and use of Pole Assisted Walking specifically designed for anyone experiencing Essential Tremor.

As this is a developing field of study this document should be considered as an interim document which will be amended in the light of experience.

On this point - anyone using this module will have an important role to play in developing the technique.

Please do email your experience of the use of this module to Phill at peakfit2@gmail.com

Note, however, you should seek advice from your medical advisor / Physio before commencing any form of walking or other physical activity.

Potential movement issues.

Essential Tremor can create a range of movement difficulties. So far as walking is concerned the use of Nordic Walking poles can help you to remain mobile and to exercise outdoors whilst retaining balance.

Pole Assisted Walking is a modified form of ordinary Nordic Walking, which is recommended by the NHS, Public Health England and is supported by a very large amount of research.

Nordic Walking can be used for:

1. Improving aerobic fitness.
2. Improving strength.
3. To train balance.
4. Improve coordination.
5. Improve agility.
6. Improve gait, that is stepping length.

No other form of training can achieve these results at the same time.

Pole **Assisted** Walking carries these benefits to a higher level and enables individuals with various movement difficulties to exercise effectively in the outdoors.

In all cases the Pole Assisted Walking must be adapted to the needs of you, as an individual.

Issue	POLE ASSISTED WALKING
Aerobic fitness	Improves aerobic fitness but to be really effective must raise heart rate such that you feel out of breath. How to do this will be dealt with in detail below.
Strength	Both lower and upper body strength improve with practice.
Balance	Improves balance even in cases where balance is very poor.
Co-ordination.	Same as for balance.
Agility	Same as for balance.
Gait	Gait, that is step length, can be improved, details later in this course.
Breathing	Improving aerobic fitness will have a beneficial effect on breathing capability.

Using the Nordic Poles with Essential Tremor.

There are a number of ways in which the poles can be used to help with Essential Tremor.

It must be remembered, however, that someone who experiences severe Essential Tremor may not be able to use them in the traditional Nordic Walking fashion. Neither do they need to in order to gain the benefit. Pole Assisted Walking is a form of Nordic Walking which is modified to bring benefits to anyone experiencing any movement issues

There follows advice on the use of Pole Assisted Walking and daily exercise with the poles.

APAP:-

The initials APAP should be committed to memory as they stand for the four key elements of Pole Assisted Walking as shown above.

1. Angle of the pole.
2. Point, the position of the point relative to the foot.
3. Arm, out as straight as possible but not locked rigid. A slight elbow bend is fine. Try to move arm from the shoulder, moving it forward in front of and behind the body if you can.
4. Pressure, push on the pole with force using the glove, do not grip tightly.

Basic technique:-

Because Essential Tremor presents with many potential movement issues, and can differ from person to person, it is necessary to try the techniques detailed below bit by bit.

Likewise, you may well progress to modifying your own technique as you build your personal experience.

However it is absolutely vital that you do only what feels comfortable. Never try to do more. The CORRECT method of using the poles is the one which suits you.

There follows a number of photos depicting a progression of method for pole use. Only progress from one to another once you feel comfortable with each technique and do not try to progress through the various techniques unless you have mastered the previous one and feel comfortable with it. STOP trying to progress when you find the method which suits you best. Remember the correct method is the one which suits you personally.

The various different modes of use depicted within the photos depend essentially upon the angle to the vertical of the pole and the position of the point relative to the foot. This is illustrated in the photos.

- It is very important NOT to grip the pole tightly. The glove is there to enable you to push on the pole, it is not necessary to grip tightly and in fact doing so can lead to sore shoulders.
- Always keep your head up. Pretend you are wearing Jeans and try to put your shoulder blades into your back pockets.
- You can look at the ground in front of you by moving your eye balls down, you don't need to put your head down.
- Holding your head down will stress your neck and shoulders.

	<p>1. This is how hand fits into glove.</p> <p>The glove design is unique and is totally different to those fitted to hiking poles.</p>
	<p>2. Do not grip tightly.</p>
	<p>3. Arm position.</p>



4. Start using poles by holding them vertical.
- Put right pole forward.
 - Then move right foot near to pole.
 - Repeat with left pole and left foot.
 - Always right pole right foot, left pole left foot.
 - Walk naturally moving poles and feet in a rhythmic motion.



5. Progress....but only if you can and feel comfortable, angle head of pole down with point level with front of foot. Push right hand back and pole will push right leg forward. Then push left hand back and pole pushes left leg forward.

Alternate right and left hands in walking motion.



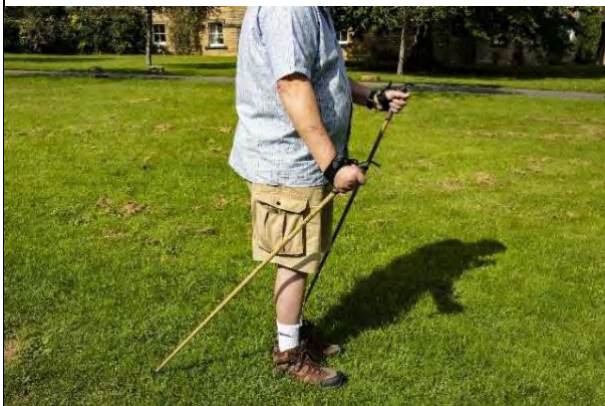
6. Progress....but only if you can and feel comfortable, angle head of pole down a little farther with point a little farther back.

- Push on pole as before.



7. Progress....but only if you can and feel comfortable, angle head of pole down more with point just behind foot.

- Push on pole as before.



8. Final progress, once again only if you feel comfortable, head of pole far down and point behind you. Push yourself forward with the poles. Alternating right then left arms and legs.

- As you push yourself forward try to ensure you swing arm from the shoulder, moving arm in front and then behind you. As always only do as much as you feel comfortable with.



9. If you are going downhill and feel unstable place poles in front of you.

- Right pole right foot, left pole left foot.



10. IF you ever feel unstable you can steady yourself by placing both poles in front.

- **When alternating right and left arms push on right hand then pole goes back and it pushes right leg forward. Push on left hand then pole goes back and it pushes left leg forward.**



Potential problems.

Use the rubber feet on poles to prevent the clicking sound on hard surfaces. But you may find that the poles then slip more, especially if surface is wet.

If you really do want to use the feet the slip can be reduced by reducing the angle of the pole with it closer to the vertical and point closer to front of the foot.

Fatigue: -

It may sound strange, but is perfectly true, but exercise can actually improve feelings of fatigue. Therefore, don't be afraid to exercise if you are feeling tired. Quite often this is a psychological effect and once you start exercising you will usually feel better.

Essential Aerobics: -

Aerobic exercise is essential for everyone but if Essential Tremor affects walking this can present problems. The use of Pole Assisted Walking can help considerably.

Too much too soon, too hard can be counterproductive and could result in injury. Take care to follow a reasonable regime. See summary table at the end of this module for guidance.

Intervals: -

By far the most effective method of increasing fitness using aerobic exercise with the poles, and actually it's the best aerobic method for all types of exercise, is to use Interval Training. This has been used successfully for a very long time, it is even thought that perhaps the Greeks used it when training for their original Olympic Games.

The method consists of alternating more vigorous intervals of time with easy intervals. So far as Pole Assisted Walking is concerned the vigorous could be increasing speed, that is pace, or increasing the force with which you push the poles.

Therefore, the possible sequences could be faster pace for x time, slower pace for y time and repeat or, push harder for x time, then push lightly for y time. Specific time intervals are discussed below.

NOTE WELL the faster pace and push harder listed here are relative terms, what is fast or hard for one person may be too fast or too hard for another.

You'll be able to judge what is fast or harder for you with a simple Talk Test. When fast or hard enough you'll be able to talk only in broken sentences. You must, however, be very careful how you perform this training. Remember that too much, too fast and too hard can have the opposite effect to that which you desire.

How to train with Aerobic Intervals .

There are several ways to perform aerobic intervals, even some using apps on smartphones, but there is an easier way.

1. Start with a 5-minute fairly easy walk.
2. Then change to a fast pace or hard push until you are definitely out of breath and can only talk in broken sentences. Continue for a count of either 15 or 30 depending which is most comfortable.
3. Then slow down until your breathing becomes steady, but bear in mind that steady breathing is faster than it would be if just strolling along.
4. Then fast pace, or hard push, once again until you are definitely out of breath and can talk only in broken sentences. Continue for a count of either 15 or 30 depending which is most comfortable.

Do not be over concerned if you cannot maintain at least 15 if this is too strenuous try a count of 10 instead.

Health Walking.

As you will see in the summary table at the end of this module Health Walking is the alternative to Aerobic Walking because you cannot continue with the latter day after day.

The Health Walk technique is less strenuous than Aerobic Intervals. During this you can concentrate on pushing yourself forward at, what for you personally, is a medium pace. You still need to get a little out of breath but not as much as during Aerobic Walking.

Remember to pay close attention to your surroundings and the nature around you such as trees, flowers, wildlife, during your Health Walking.

Note that the following plan relates to individuals who can follow it without undue stress. It needs to be modified if your personal abilities do not allow you to follow it.

Don't be concerned, however, if you cannot follow this plan exactly. Even a more gentle form of Pole Assisted Walking will have great benefits for anyone experiencing Essential Tremor.

The general plan is: -

1. Do Aerobic Intervals 3 days per week interspersed with Health Walking. Don't do two consecutive days of Aerobics.
2. Health Walking on the other 4 days in a week.
3. Once you become comfortable with this for 30 minutes each session you can progress to 40 minutes each session then build slowly week by week to a maximum of 60.

Note you must only progress from one stage to the next having performed a stage for at least two weeks and found it to be satisfactory. If a stage proves to be too much revert back to the previous stage. In particular you never need to do more than 60 minutes. More is not better once you reach a point with which you are comfortable.

Note... you can split the 30-minute sessions into two 15-minute sessions twice a day, likewise you could do two 30 minutes twice a day. BUT only if you feel able should you progress beyond 30 minutes a day. Go back to shorter sessions if you wish. Rest and recovery are an essential part of training.