



JORDAN VERLAGE PHOTOS/SUN MEDIA

Lisa Workman has the pole position on exercise: you don't need snow and skis to get a good workout at any time of year.

# Stick to it!

Lisa Workman isn't particularly fond of that hackneyed old phrase "use it or lose it."

But she acknowledges that like many cliches, it's true.

"Your muscle mass is only as much as you use it," says the fit 29-year-old Edmontonian.

Workman, a certified exercise physiologist through the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology, works in health care.

The kinesiology expert helps patients "use it" again after they've started to "lose it" for a variety of reasons.

Since she's also a Nordic walking instructor, she often tells them to take a hike.

"The majority of the population is able to walk and be mobile so that would be your first place to start," she explains.

"Nordic walking is excellent because it allows for that progression from just walking to adding a bit more intensity to your walk with the poles."

Workman tried Nordic walking nearly three years ago and loved it.

She says she figured her younger patients would benefit from adding poles to their walk-



ing routine to increase intensity, while her older patients would benefit from the support of walking poles.

Nordic walking burns 40% more calories than regular walking, according to Leki, a pole manufacturer.

This scribe worked up a sweat while recently taking a pair of Leki walking poles out for a fun hour-long jaunt under Workman's tutelage.

The extra energy expenditure, of course, comes from involving the upper body.

"Normal walking is lower-body cardiovascular exercise mostly," she notes. "So getting the arms in is a huge part and just being able to use those muscles in a different way."

And there's no need to store the poles for the winter. Simply remove the rubber tips to unveil the metal tips, designed to grip snow and ice.

Workman uses her poles year-round.

"I'm very much a spring/summer person, so I might not go as much in winter," she says with a chuckle.

Workman tries to fit Nordic walking into her schedule once a week, for at least an hour and sometimes up to 90 minutes.

She keeps up a good pace and estimates she travels about eight kilometres an outing.

"I find I go faster when I have the poles," she says.

"I'll do trails, sidewalks and paths, switching between the two different tips, the little rubber booty and the actual spike. I live closer to the river valley, so I tend to head into there, Hawrelak Park or the McKinnon Ravine area."

## Start slow

She advises beginners to start slow. "I have a base level of fitness so I can go for that long duration but for some people it might just be 15 or 20 minutes to start, and then slowly adding on more and using the poles differently, too," she says.

"For someone who is just

starting, once a week would be fine. But upwards of three to five times a week (if that's your main activity) would be the recommendation for cardiovascular exercise."

Workman, who follows Canada's food guide to fuel her busy body, keeps active six out of seven days, opting to vary her workouts throughout the week.

Besides Nordic walking, she teaches spin classes, does yoga and plays recreational hockey.

The former competitive synchronized swimmer still hits the pool and makes a splash in the occasional aquacise class.

Plus, she pumps iron and takes fitness classes. For her, the body is an intricate machine designed to move. That's why she never frets about the numbers on the scale.

"I go by how I feel," she says. "A lot of the activity that I do is because I just love to move."

Use it or ... well, you know.

**Cary Castagna is a certified personal trainer through Can-Fit-Pro.**

cary.castagna@sunmedia.ca

