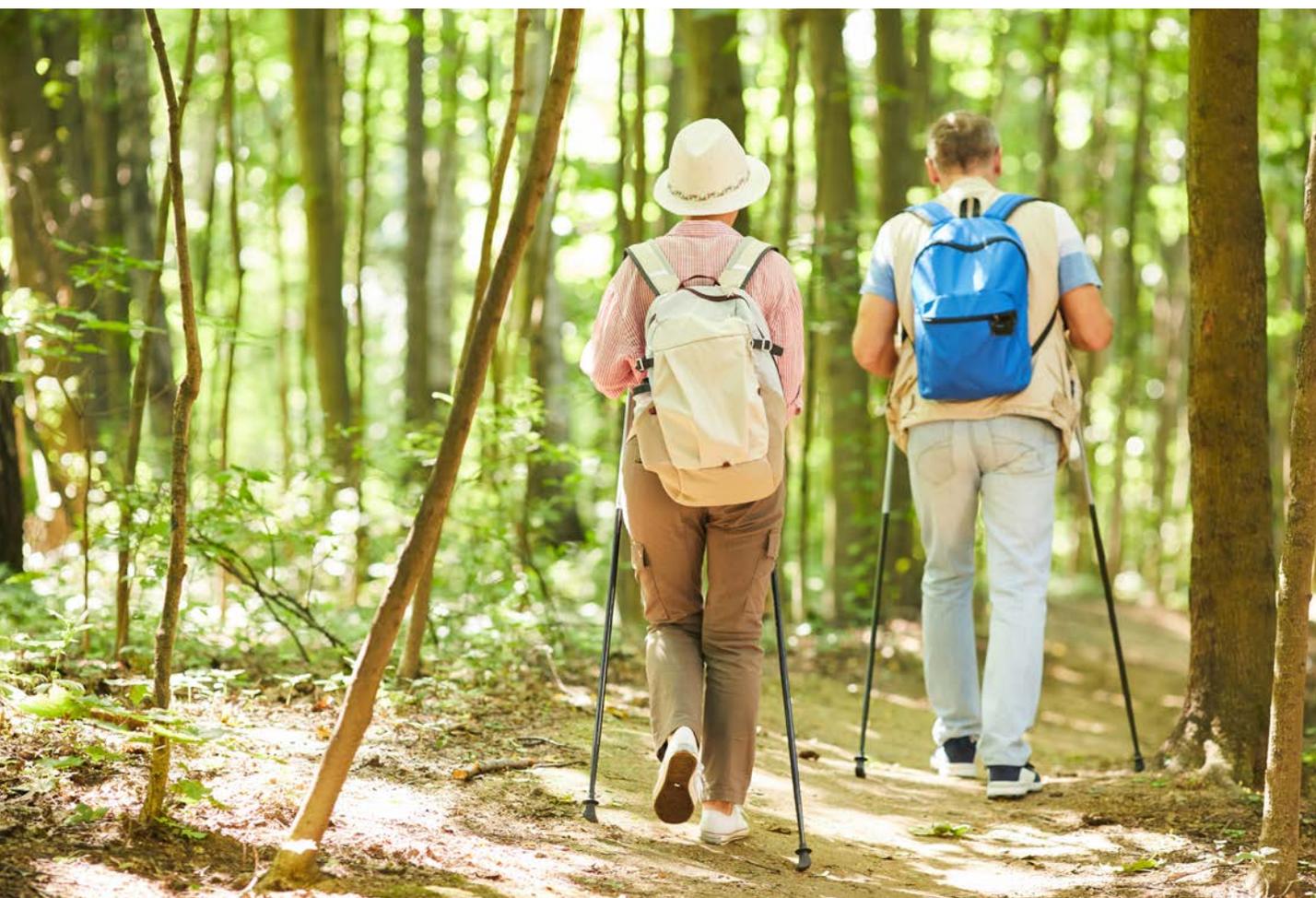




# How Walking Poles may Support my Hands

A USER'S GUIDE TO POLE WALKING INFORMATION



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# How walking poles may support my hands:

Using walking poles does require you to be **able to hold** the pole in both hands. This might be more difficult for you if your stroke-affected hand has decreased strength, sensitivity, and ability to grasp.

Similar to picking out the right type of feet on the walking poles to support your needs, you will also have to take into consideration the different types of handles and features walking poles are designed with.

Let's talk about handles first!

There are many different types! Here are a **few examples** of the different types of handles:



Strapless  
Ergonomic Design



Thumb-Hole  
Wrist Strap



Wrist Strap

# How walking poles may support my hands (continued):

## Which type of handle is best for me to use?

Traditional Nordic Walking Poles have handles with straps. These straps go over the wrist.



### Walking Poles with Wrist Straps

#### Pros

- When using the wrist straps, you can let go of the pole grip without losing the pole<sup>17</sup>

#### Cons

- If you trip while pole walking, having a pole attached may increase your risk of injury

# How walking poles may support my hands (continued):

The thumb-hole wrist straps are designed so you can really push a downward type pressure while controlling the swinging motion<sup>17-18</sup>.

It allows you to propel yourself forward.



Walking Poles with Thumb-Hole Wrist Straps	
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May be helpful for someone with a slightly weaker grip and/or coordination difficulties</li><li>• Provides a bit more support to the wrist than the traditional thin wrist straps</li><li>• Can help keep the pole attached to your wrist</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If you trip while pole walking, having a pole attached may increase your risk of injury</li></ul>

# How walking poles may support my hands (continued):

The Activator® Poles by Urban Poling Inc. are strapless for safety and reducing injuries. This handle design may be safer for you if you are still in the rehabilitation phase of your recovery process.

Activator® Poles by Urban Poling Inc.	
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strapless to promote safety and prevent injury</li><li>• Wider handles with an ergonomic design</li><li>• Pressing on the ledge increases core strength and provides off-loading</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If you have difficulties grasping with your stroke-affected hand you may not be able to keep a grip on the handle</li></ul>



The poles are labelled right and left. Instead of a strap, your hand will rest along a wide ledge. This may be beneficial for you if you have difficulty grasping thinner handles. When the hand rests along the ledge, it is in a neutral position to help relieve any pressure off of the joints and support your wrist. When you press on the ledge it will increase your core strength and provide off-loading (or relieve pressure and provide support)<sup>13, 19</sup>.

# How walking poles may support my hands (continued):

Something else to consider is the type of locking mechanism the walking poles have. There are generally two types.

## The Turning Lock Mechanism:

- With the turning lock mechanism, you will have to tighten the walking pole by twisting the pole.
- This type of locking mechanism may be harder for people who have difficulty with lifting and lowering (or flexing and extending) their hand at the wrist.
- For example, if it is difficult for you to open jar lids, turn on facets that twist open, and/or tap your hand up and down, the turning lock mechanism may not be a good fit for you.
- This is very important as you do not want the walking poles to collapse on you when you are walking because this may lead to injury.



# How walking poles may support my hands (continued):

If you are worried about the strength needed to lock the turning lock mechanism, the button-lock mechanism will be a better fit for you.

## The Button Lock Mechanism:

- The walking poles are secured with a button-lock. This is similar to locking mechanisms used on canes.
- This type of button-lock mechanism may be a better fit for you if you have had a stroke and are having difficulties with hand strength.
- It is best to double check the button lock before putting your weight on the pole to ensure it is secure.



Take into consideration **your height**, as you need to make sure the length of the walking pole will be appropriate for you based on your height. For example, the Activator<sup>®</sup> poles are adjustable to 6 feet and the Activator 2<sup>®</sup> poles are adjustable to 6 feet 4 inches. You also want to ensure the walking poles can support **your weight** as well.

# How walking poles may support my hands (continued):

## Concerns about sensitivity or feeling too much vibration in your hands?

Prolonged periods of experiencing vibration in your hands may also feel like numbness<sup>20</sup>.

Most walking poles are designed with enhanced anti-vibration features. When you do something over and over, for example hammering a nail, you might feel vibrations in your hand.

Vibration is small movements from forces outside of our body<sup>21-22</sup>. Pole walking is an activity that might cause feelings of vibration in your hands.

Some **anti-vibration features** to look out for on poles include:

- ✓ A black ferrule
- ✓ The rubber tip to absorb vibration while walking

## To reduce your exposure to vibration, you could:

- ✓ Speak to your occupational therapist or rehabilitation professional to learn more about vibration and how to minimize it
- ✓ Use the walking poles on more even terrains
- ✓ Take breaks as needed

To read more about using walking poles on **different types of terrain**, see the “Where Should I Pole Walk” section.

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