

# Kenai Spine

240 Hospital Place, Suite 103  
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On the campus of Central Peninsula Hospital  
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In affiliation with  
Central Peninsula Hospital



Today, Curtis stays in shape and keeps his core strong by using the elliptical trainer and doing special core exercises.

## School administrator recovers from back pain without surgery

Curtis began experiencing right lower back pain early in 2011. The pain started out gradual at first, but it didn't take long before his symptoms began to limit activity. The pain was radiating from his waist area down into his knee. Curtis found some relief from the pain when sitting and laying down. He went to an orthopedic doctor, who examined Curtis and ordered an MRI. The MRI results showed a ruptured disc at L2/L3. The doctor told Curtis he would need spinal fusion surgery to treat his condition.

Curtis was hesitant to have spine surgery without getting a second opinion first. He also knew he could not continue to live with the pain he was experiencing and wanted to get back to his normal activity level. The pain was so severe, Curtis was not able stand or walk for long periods of time, which meant he was not able to work.

Curtis's wife knew Dr. Craig Humphreys, a fellowship-trained spine surgeon, and Curtis made an appointment to see Dr. Humphreys. Dr. Humphreys examined Curtis and viewed his diagnostics. He next talked with Curtis

about his treatment options, both surgical and nonsurgical. Curtis was in so much pain that he was ready to move forward with surgery. He also knew if surgery was necessary, he wanted it performed by Dr. Humphreys.

While surgery was an option to treat Curtis' condition, Dr. Humphreys also talked with him about trying conservative treatment first. He explained to Curtis that many times, the pain and inflammation originating from damaged discs can be treated nonsurgically by reducing the inflammation surrounding the damaged disc and strengthening the spine to give it more support. Movement can work like a vacuum to suck the center of the disc back into place, helping release pressure on the nerve.

Curtis and his wife were relieved to hear that surgery may not be necessary and he decided to try the non-surgical approach. Curtis was prescribed some pain medication to help temporarily relieve his symptoms and reduce the inflammation. Soon, he was relieved to find that his pain symptoms were improving and he was able to gradually increase his

activity level. He was able to return to work as a school administrator. While the pain was not completely gone, it was becoming much less intense.

A couple weeks went by and Curtis again visited Dr. Humphreys. Since his pain symptoms were improving, they decided to continue the conservative approach. Curtis also began to incorporate some special stretching exercises into his routine. His pain symptoms continued to improve and he no longer needed the pain medicine. A few more weeks passed and Curtis visited Dr. Humphreys for a follow-up, he was happy to report he no longer had the low back pain or leg pain.

Today, Curtis is back to his normal lifestyle, which includes using the elliptical and doing core exercises to help keep his back strong. "I'm grateful to Dr. Humphreys for suggesting the non-surgical treatment options, especially considering I was ready to have spine surgery," says Curtis. "So far, so good. Today I'm pain free and I avoided a surgery."

### S. Craig Humphreys, M.D.

*Fellowship-Trained Spine Surgeon, Board-Certified Orthopedic Surgeon*

Dr. Craig Humphreys earned his undergraduate degree at The University of Notre Dame. After graduating from the University of Notre Dame, he attended Loyola Stritch School of Medicine where he received his medical degree. He then completed an Internship and Residency at Loyola University Medical Center while also volunteering time as an MD in other countries, including India, St. Lucia and Lithuania. Dr. Humphreys then completed a Fellowship in Orthopedic Spine Surgery at The Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee. In 1996, he joined the Center for Sports Medicine and Orthopaedics in Chattanooga, Tennessee, where he practiced for more than 15 years with a spine specialized practice attracting complex spine patients from across Tennessee and northern Georgia. Dr. Humphreys' practice philosophy is to explore and exhaust all non-surgical options in advance of the patient considering spine surgery. This includes the use of spine-specialized therapy and injections that can relieve pain symptoms. Kenai Spine includes spine-specialized physical therapy to complement and augment his spine surgery expertise. Dr. Humphreys is glad to be a part of the Alaska medical community, and welcomes other physicians to contact him directly.

