

Kenai Spine

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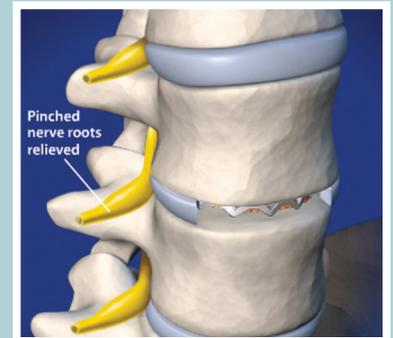


Illustration above shows the artificial implant, filled with bone graft, inserted into the empty space. This helps to realign the vertebral bones and remove pressure from the nerve roots. ©ViewMedica, image used with permission.

Healthcare CEO back on the job after pain relieving spine surgery

Becky has been working in the healthcare industry since high school when she volunteered with the American Red Cross and was recognized as "Volunteer of the Year". She went on to complete her bachelors degree and later an MBA. Today Becky is CEO of a large orthopedic group in Tennessee.

An active professional, Becky also enjoys an active personal life, some of her hobbies include exercising, gardening and spending time with her husband and family. In 2005, Becky started having some low back pain. Because of her background in the healthcare industry, she didn't think too much about it at first. She knew that about 80% of the time, back strain is muscle related and will go away on its own. But when her pain lingered, Becky went to a physician in her orthopedic group, Dr. Craig Humphreys. She chose Dr. Humphreys, a fellowship-trained spine surgeon, because of his conservative approach to caring for patients with back and neck pain.

Dr. Humphreys examined Becky and ordered diagnostics. After viewing the results of her MRI, the orthopedic surgeon explained to her that she had degenerative disc disease at L5-S1. He next talked with her about treatment options and suggested she try conservative care like physical therapy, anti-inflammatory pain

relievers and injection therapy first. Becky agreed to do so. These non-surgical treatments can help reduce the inflammation and strengthen the musculature surrounding the damaged disc to give it more support.

Becky partnered with her personal trainer Carolyn, to learn special exercises and stretches to help strengthen her core muscles. She also had injection therapy to help relieve her symptoms. The nonsurgical treatments helped relieve Becky's back pain for several years.

In 2009, Becky started having a dull pain in her low back again and this time it would not go away. She tried moving around to help relieve the pain but nothing seemed to help - sitting for long periods of time was very painful and sleeping was becoming impossible.

She again visited Dr. Humphreys. He ordered a new MRI of her spine and the results showed that Becky's degenerative disc disease had worsened. The spine surgeon talked with Becky about her treatment options, she could continue the conservative care but because she had already tried these options, Dr. Humphreys also talked with her about surgical options including the ALIF (Anterior Lumbar Interbody Fusion) procedure.

This procedure involves removing part of

the damaged disc while a portion of the disc is left behind to help contain the bone graft material. Dr. Humphreys emphasized to Becky that surgery was not absolutely necessary but was likely the best option for complete relief of pain and return to activity. Becky knew she wanted to return to her normal activity level and decided to have the spine surgery.

Dr. Humphreys performed the L5-S1 ALIF procedure in March 2010. He removed a part of the damaged disc, then inserted a cage into the empty disc space. This realigned the vertebral bones and relieved pressure on the nerves. A small plate was placed over the L5-S1 level.

Becky's surgery was a success, she experienced relief from the pain symptoms and was walking the next afternoon. She was careful to follow the post surgery instructions. In time, Becky was back in the gym working with her personal trainer, focusing on exercises that would help strengthen her core and leg muscles. "Dr. Humphreys treats his patients like family, he made certain my non-surgical options were exhausted before spine surgery. He made sure all my questions were answered before surgery - so there were no surprises," she remembers.

Today Becky is pain free, back to her busy career and not limited in her activity level at all.

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.

