

# Kenai Spine

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Central Peninsula Hospital

## Paramedic gets back to life with Kenai Spine

When she is not busy working as a paramedic and occupational health advisor, Tanya enjoys running, hiking and going to the gym. She started feeling pain on the right side of her neck about five years ago, but Tanya didn't think too much of it at first. As the months and years went by though, she noticed her once mild neck pain becoming more frequent and at times incapacitating. "I also began feeling numbness in my hands and fingers; and some pain in my arms," Tanya remembers.

She decided to go to an orthopedic physician for relief from her symptoms. The physician ordered an MRI of her cervical spine and after reviewing the results of the MRI, talked with Tanya about treatment options for her condition, including injection therapy and spine surgery. Tanya wanted to exhaust other conservative treatments first, including natural joint supplements, physical therapy and massage.

The non-surgical care did offer some temporary relief. Unfortunately, Tanya's pain always returned and continued to worsen. "I began experiencing severe headaches, nausea, and pain that radiated into my arms and occasionally into my feet and legs," Tanya says. Her symptoms were interfering with her normal lifestyle.

Tanya returned again to her physician and because her condition had not improved, he explained to Tanya that surgery would likely be necessary eventually. She was still not ready for spine surgery. Her physician prescribed some pain medication to help her with sleep at night.

Tanya continued to work but found herself counting down the hours until she could return home and take some medication for pain relief. Activities like running and hiking were now impossible, she was unable to even do her grocery shopping. Because of the drastic change to her lifestyle, Tanya began struggling with depression. She was ready get back to her active lifestyle.

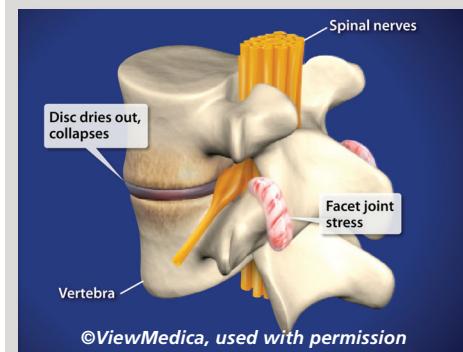
A friend of Tanya's told her about Dr. Craig Humphreys, a fellowship-trained spine



*Above, Tanya runs with her black lab mix, Scooby. After Dr. Humphreys performed the spine surgery to relieve her pain and numbness symptoms, Tanya is now pain free and back to her active lifestyle.*

surgeon, relocating to Soldotna. She made an appointment with Dr. Humphreys at Kenai Spine. At her appointment, Dr. Humphreys reviewed her medical history and then ordered x-rays and an MRI of her spine. The results showed that Cervical Spondylolisthesis at C4/C5 was causing her pain and numbness symptoms. Because Tanya had exhausted non-surgical care already, Dr. Humphreys talked with her about the spine surgery that would treat her degenerative cervical spine. Tanya was ready to enjoy life again and decided to have the spine surgery. Dr. Humphreys performed the spine surgery and fusion. Tanya was relieved to feel immediate relief from her pain and numbness symptoms. She was able to get out of bed and walk the day after surgery. Tanya gradually increased her activity level.

"I have my active life back, I feel great, no more depression," she reflects. Today, Tanya is not limited in her activity level at all. She is back to work and free to run, hike and go to the gym — all without pain.



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*Illustration above demonstrates Spondylolisthesis. As the body ages, the spinal discs begin to dry out and lose flexibility. This places added stress on the facet joints and ligaments that hold the vertebrae together. The vertebrae may shift out of alignment and excess bone growth may occur. The degeneration process can result in painful compression of the nerve roots or spinal cord.*

### 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.

