



## Ailey Dancer Gets Back into Routine After Scoliosis Surgery

By Erin Billups

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An estimated seven million Americans are diagnosed with some form of scoliosis, a curvature of the spine. As health reporter Erin Billups explains, for many, treatments available today mean a normal life and even an extraordinary one.

Lloyd Boyd dances on the prestigious Alvin Ailey Stage as a member of the Ailey II company. Getting there was not easy after he was diagnosed with scoliosis at 16.

"The instructor said to me, 'There is something wrong to your back, it's something, it's uneven,'" he recalls.

His spine was curving to the side. Doctors gave him two options: Wear a brace and stop dancing, or have extensive fusion surgery to straighten his spine.

He says giving up dancing was not an option, so he chose surgery.

"It's done with multiple screws placed into the spine and then rods used to correct the spine. But in addition to that we release the spine, made multiple cuts to the bone, and we can take a curve that's extremely severe and make it basically straight," explains Dr. Todd Albert, a spine surgeon at the Hospital for Special Surgery.

Boyd needed six months to recover.

"You're retraining your body how to move how it used to. So that's probably one of the hardest things that I probably ever had to do," says Boyd.

Then a few years later, during his senior year of college, he felt lumps in his back. The metal rods fused to his spine had caused an infection, which is rare. Once again he had fusion surgery and again he made his way back to dance.

"I don't think of it as being anything out of the ordinary, I mean people overcome obstacles all the time and this is just one of the many few that I have to do," says Boyd.

By some estimates two to three percent of the population has scoliosis. Diagnosis often occurs in tweens and teens.

Non-invasive treatments and exercises work for some. Others, like Boyd, need surgery.

"They need spinal fusion surgery to prevent the curve from getting too much, because it can start impinging on their lung and affect their breathing," says Dr. Albert.

Luckily, Albert says with modern medicine what was impossible is possible. It also helps to be in good shape like Boyd.

If you'd like to see him in action, Ailey II's season runs through April 10.

Watch video here:

<http://www.nyl.com/nyc/all-boroughs/health-and-medicine/2016/04/4/dancer-s-scoliosis-diagnosis-and-treatment.html>