

Head trauma linked to severe neurological problems for professional football players

The types of brain damage that can occur as a result of being a professional football player have received increased attention in recent years. For example, there is growing awareness of a particularly severe degenerative brain disease called chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE). The disease has been linked to the deaths of Tom McHale, who played for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, and Dave Duerson, who played for the Chicago Bears.

In fact, researchers at Boston University have now found signs of CTE in nearly 60 former professional football players when their brains were analyzed after their deaths, according to the university's CTE Center. (CTE can be diagnosed only after death.)

In most cases, CTE is thought to be caused by repeated blows to the head, which damage brain tissue and lead to a buildup of an abnormal protein called tau, according to the CTE Center.

In addition to football players, CTE has also been seen in boxers and hockey players. It causes symptoms such as impaired learning and memory loss, and has been linked with suicide. These symptoms often begin years or decades after players have ended their athletic careers, according to the Boston Universitycenter.

It's not known how many hits to the head or concussions a person needs to experience to develop CTE. A person's genetics also likely plays a role, because not everyone with a history of repeated brain trauma develops the disease, the CTE Center says.

Other studies have linked professional football with neurological problems that may or may not be related to CTE. In a 2013 study, researchers scanned the brains of retired football players while they performed certain tasks and found that the players were more likely to have abnormalities in their brain activity, compared with healthy people.

Read full, original article: [Football & Head Injuries: What the Brain Research Says](#)