

NIOSH landmark historical letter/website report of Mortality in 6,848 retired NFL players

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In 1994, the National Institute of Occupational Health and Safety completed a study of retired National Football League (NFL) players in response to concerns of early mortality. Overall, former NFL players had a decreased risk of death compared with the general population, but when stratified by position played, offensive and defensive lineman had an increased risk of cardiovascular disease compared with players at other positions. Specifically, lineman had a 52% greater risk of cardiovascular death compared with the general population and 3.7 times the risk of dying from heart disease compared with nonlinemen. Greater body mass index (BMI) may have contributed to the cardiovascular deaths of linemen but could not fully explain the observed mortality, suggesting that other unmeasured cardiac risk factors were involved.