AMERICAN ACADEMY OF NEUROLOGY
POSITION STATEMENT
ON SPORTS THAT INCLUDE INTENTIONAL TRAUMA TO THE BRAIN

Introduction
Members of the American Academy of Neurology specialize in treating disorders of the brain and nervous system. Their clinical experiences and reviews of formal studies of the effects of blows to the head in sports lead to the following conclusions and recommendations.

Conclusions
Sports that include intentional trauma to the brain (including boxing, mixed martial arts, and extreme fighting) are a serious threat to the neurologic function of those who engage in them. Formal studies have shown that even with protective head gear, measurable, persistent damage to the brain occurs, with some participants suffering serious neurologic damage. Children, who are even more susceptible to damage in these sports, especially when they begin at an early age, are becoming increasingly involved in such sports.

Recommendations
Sports that include intentional head trauma, such as boxing, mixed martial arts, and extreme fighting, should:
1. Be regulated to reduce the occurrence of permanent brain damage by reduction in the number of direct blows to the head.
2. Have a program to provide participants in these sports:
   a. Required formal neurologic examinations, including brain imaging, at regular intervals for all participants who have been knocked unconscious.
   b. Additional testing be recommended and monitored by a neurologist who is designated by the state boxing commission.
3. Have neurologists designated by regulatory commissions for evaluation of boxers as needed.
4. Have counseling services for high-risk participants who have suffered significant head trauma.
5. Have carefully designed and tested brain damage preventive measures.
6. Have community and individual education and sports safety programs to inform participants of the risks to their health and how to minimize them.
7. Be strictly regulated for participants under the age of 16 years to eliminate blows to the head.
Approved
AAN Task Force on Sports That Include Intentional Trauma to the Brain,
Including Boxing
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