

— OVERVIEW



COLLECTING AND ANALYZING DATA

Read more about the numerous initiatives the NFL supports to gather and analyze data to help guide continuous efforts to protect the players and advance the game.

[see what's new in 2019](#)

Collecting and analyzing injury data

An independent third-party company, IQVIA, compiles and analyzes injury data collected throughout the year and shares it with the NFL, the NFL Players Association and the NFL medical and football communities. Examining this data helps the NFL better understand trends in injuries and serves as a guide for ongoing health and safety efforts, including protocols and rules changes.



“Our players work incredibly hard to prepare themselves to perform at the highest levels on game day. Our mission is to work equally as hard on health and safety to try to make the game safer—because health and safety remains our number one priority.”

-DR. ALLEN SILLS

NFL Chief Medical Officer

A drop in injuries in 2018 drives further change

Last year, the NFL launched the 2018 Injury Reduction Plan which included three important initiatives with the goal to reduce concussions: education- and information-sharing around preseason practices, better-performing helmets, and safety-focused rules changes. The number of diagnosed concussions NFL players suffered in the 2018 season dropped by 29%, indicating that the heightened effort around the Injury Reduction Plan may have contributed to the difference.



“There’s been a culture shift in the league, and everyone is engaged and rallied around this common safety goal. It’s an exciting time.”

-DR. ALLEN SILLS

NFL Chief Medical Officer



Building a lower extremity injury reduction plan in 2019

As the NFL continues to use injury data to drive health and safety advances, new efforts are underway to address lower extremity injuries, which remain the highest contributor to days missed of playing time.

Building on the concussion reduction plan, the NFL is taking a similar approach with an injury reduction strategy focused on key lower extremity injuries. This plan includes a comprehensive look at turf systems, evaluating both natural and artificial surfaces and correlating injury rates, and analyzing the timing and acclimation period of training camp to learn how those may correlate to injury. Additionally, the NFL is working to track cleats to better understand injury rates associated with various cleats and which might offer better protection for players.

Rules changes

The NFL continues to evaluate rules and evolve the game to try to improve protections for players. At the end of every season, the NFL Competition Committee convenes to review all competitive aspects of the game, including playing rules, roster regulations, technology, game-day operations and player safety. Since 2002, the NFL has made more than 50 rules changes intended to reduce risk for players.



2019 RULES CHANGES

01 KICKOFF

Owners voted to make permanent the kickoff rules changes that were implemented in 2018. The rules changes resulted in a 38% decrease in reported concussions on kickoff plays when compared to the three-year average of reported concussions on kickoff plays from the 2015-2017 seasons before the changes were implemented.

02 BLINDSIDE BLOCK

Owners voted to expand protection of defenseless players by eliminating the blindside block. It is now prohibited for a blocker to initiate forcible contact with his head, shoulder or forearm when his path is toward or parallel to his own end line. The penalty for an illegal blindside block is a loss of 15 yards and an automatic first down.