

Dangerous things connected with boxing



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Long Term Effects of Boxing on the Brain

Boxing and brain injuries pretty much go hand in hand, as thousands of cases are reported every year of some kind of brain injury caused by boxing. These can range from simple concussions, to crippling brain diseases that eventually set in due to numerous years in the ring, and even death.

According to The American Association of Neurological Surgeons, “ about 90% of boxers will get a brain injury at some point in their career”, and many of these people will get subsequent injuries, a very dangerous thing when it comes to your brain (Kennard). It’s these repeated injuries and constant blows day after day that can lead to permanent, life-changing brain diseases.

The extent of the damage a boxer’s body has suffered depends on many factors. As dangerous as boxing is, if you decide to try it out some day and you take a few punches to the head, you should not be worried about brain damage. The length of a boxer’s career, the number of fights they are in, and their skill level all play into the equation. A higher skill level would mean more powerful punches. This is evidenced in the fact that there are few amateur boxers who suffer from severe brain damage, where as many professional boxers do. After a yearlong study of boxers’ and mixed-martial arts fighters’ brain activity, scientists concluded that it takes approximately six years before the brain starts to feel the effects, and about 10-12 years before an even greater level of deterioration is seen (Pugmire). So for professional boxers who have been in the ring for years and years, a high risk of some kind of neurological disease is usually present.

The brain is designed to withstand pressure and force, like say a punch to the face by a boxer. What the brain is not designed to do, however, is have these pressures and forces inflicted upon it week after week for several years. Though brain damage doesn't occur instantaneously upon a blow to the head, it's these repeated blows that can cause brain tissue to wear down and cognitive activity levels to slow. Based on research by the University Hospital Heidelberg, the head is hit by such a great force and speed in certain levels of boxing that it leads to different brain tissues tearing apart. The result of this tearing is small microhemorrhages in the brain. It is unknown how often these occur in boxers but it is believed that once the brain withstands too many, the destruction of brain cells begins to occur. This is where we begin to see things like dementia and Parkinson's disease develop (University).

Another dangerous thing when it comes to boxing is a concussion. Mayo Clinic defines a concussion as “ A traumatic brain injury that alters the way your brain functions. Effects are usually temporary, but can include problems with headache, concentration, memory, judgment, balance and coordination” (Mayo). Many of us, athletes and non-athletes alike, will suffer from a concussion in our lives. Aside from sports, concussions can also be suffered through things like car accidents and falls. The Centers for Disease Control estimates that around 3.8 million people suffer from a concussion every year. Dr. Margaret Goodman, a ringside physician and well-known neurologist stated: “ The brain, which has the consistency of a hard custard, sits encased in fluid within the skull. The fluid acts like a shock absorber and prevents injury to the brain when the head is struck. Multiple blows, or even

a single blow, can result in a concussion” (Goodman). One concussion is usually a minor thing in healthy people, and they will fully recover in just a few days or a couple of weeks. Repeated concussions are what can be dangerous, as dementia and other diseases have been linked to multiple concussions.

What happens to the brain as it is repeatedly beaten and shaken by a boxer in the ring is an interesting, yet very scary thing. As each punch is delivered, a small amount of a protein called tau is formed in your brain. On microscopic slides, tau looks sort of like brown goo that accumulates on the soft tissues of the brain. In many cases, you can tell if a brain has a neurological defect simply by looking at the amount of tau that has built up. More tau on the brain means more damage suffered, and therefore, a greater likelihood of disease. Though this makes it sound as if these diseases could be easily diagnosed, quite the opposite is actually true (University).

The most notable disease when speaking on the subject of boxing and brain injuries is CTE, or Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy. This neurodegenerative disease is also known as dementia pugilistica, “ boxer’s dementia”, or most commonly, “ punch-drunk syndrome”. The term “ punch-drunk” was coined from the symptoms shown by affected boxers, which include slurred or slow speech, confusion, and body tremors. This disease can cripple the people affected by it and what makes it worse is the lack of information scientists have on what causes it. This lack of knowledge is caused by the fact that a brain can only be examined and diagnosed with CTE postmortem, or after death. This obviously makes it impossible for anyone to know if they are suffering from a brain disease such as CTE, and <https://assignbuster.com/dangerous-things-connected-with-boxing/>

also makes it impossible for doctors to find a treatment (Varlotta 71). Anyone affected by this disease is essentially helpless. Their brains are diminishing every single day, and their thoughts and behaviors will slowly begin to change. They will eventually realize something is wrong with them but nothing can be done about it, and they can't even know for sure what is causing these things to happen.

There are many reported cases of people, including a few well-known athletes, that have acted strangely or aggressively before death and it was later found that they suffer from CTE. One of the most high-profile cases is the one of professional wrestler Chris Benoit. Benoit was one of the most famous WWE wrestlers in the world at the time of his death in 2007. Benoit strangled both his wife and his son in their own home, and then eventually hung himself. This double-murder and suicide made national news and led to many federal investigations into steroid abuse in wrestling. Also found after Benoit's death, however, was extensive damage to all sides of his brain and the brain stem which resulted in a severe case of CTE (Cohen). Many people believe the disease could have played a part in Benoit's actions, and the debate of whether sports such as boxing and wrestling should be banned heated up.

Although many facts about boxing and brain damage are still unclear today, there is no doubting that the sport is dangerous. Injuries and blows to the head will occur, and too many of them will have an adverse effect on the brain's health. Our brains were built to take force and our skulls were built to protect us but neither can withstand damage day after day. Repeated punches to the head by a boxer slowly breaks down the tissues in your brain

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and destroys brain cells. Boxers must be careful of where they get hit and how often they get hit, because research shows that if you don't keep your brain healthy, it will affect you later in life.