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For the first time, a scientific study has found a possible link between head injuries and brain damage in former footballers. Researchers studied the brains of six former players who had died from dementia, and discovered that some of them had a form of the disease linked to repeated blows to the head. Our health reporter Smitha Mundasad has more.

Jeff Astle, former England footballer who died in 2002. He had degenerative brain disease, linked to repeatedly heading heavy leather footballs. His family have been campaigning for more research to find out whether lots of this can lead to long-lasting brain damage. In this latest study, scientists looked at the brains of six lifelong footballers who had developed dementia. When we examined their brains at autopsy, we saw the sorts of changes that are seen in ex-boxers, so the changes that are particularly associated with repeated head injury, which are known as CTE, chronic traumatic encephalopathy. So we have shown that head injury has occurred earlier in their life, which presumably has some impact on them developing dementia. But the science is far from certain. It's a small study, that can't prove a link between **football and dementia** and the scientists are clear their work did not analyse

the risks to children. For the average adult footballer, who plays recreationally, experts at Alzheimer's Research UK say the risks are likely to be low and outweighed by the benefits of exercise. But the Football Association says one question that needs to be answered is whether degenerative brain diseases are more common in ex-footballers and the FA says that's research it's determined to support.