

Back surgery doesn't knock all NFL players out of the game: study

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(HealthDay)—Most professional football players who have surgery for

an injured disc in the upper spine return to play and perform at a high level, a new study contends.

Researchers looked at 53 National Football League players who had surgery for a herniated disc in the upper (cervical) spine between 1979 and 2013.

Most returned to play after surgery and rehabilitation, including 67 percent of those who had upper-level injuries and 72 percent with lower injuries. Recovery time was about nine months. On average, players continued playing for about three years and 44 games after surgery, the study authors said.

Results of the study may help guide decisions for players who suffer these potentially career-ending injuries, according to researcher Dr. Harry Mai and colleagues. Mai is with the department of orthopaedic surgery at Northwestern Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago.

The study was published recently in the journal *Spine*.

More information: The American Academy of Family Physicians has more on [herniated disc](#).

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