

# Prophylactic Knee Bracing Practices Among NCAA Division I and NCAA Division I-AA Institutions

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** The use of prophylactic knee braces to reduce the incidence or decrease the severity of knee injuries in American football is controversial. The purpose of this report was to investigate the extent of prophylactic brace use in NCAA Division-I and Division-IAA football teams.

**Hypothesis:** Prophylactic bracing of offensive and defensive line positions in Division I and Division I-AA football is common.

**Study Design:** Mail survey.

**Methods:** Surveys were mailed to the Head Athletic Trainer at 112 NCAA Division I and 105 NCAA Division I-AA schools. Questions related to prophylactic bracing practices for offensive line positions, defensive line positions, and 'other' line positions. Brace type was also included, functional (custom-fit or off-the-shelf) and lateral (strapped-on or taped-on). A school was considered to use prophylactic bracing if more than 50% of their players in that position were braced.

**Results:** 143 of 217 (66%) surveys were returned. The majority of schools reported using prophylactic bracing for their offensive linemen in practice and in games, 66% and 64%, respectively. Fewer schools reported using prophylactic bracing for their defensive linemen in practice and in games, 30% and 15% respectively. Functional knee braces, rather than lateral knee braces, were the brace of choice for both the offensive (74% and 73% for practice and games, respectively) and defensive line positions (54% and 71% for practice and games, respectively).

**Conclusions:** These results indicate that, despite a lack of sound outcomes data demonstrating the efficacy of prophylactic braces to reduce the potential or severity of knee injury, their use in NCAA Division I and Division II-A football is extensive. These results strongly indicate the need for a randomized, prospective study to examine the efficacy of prophylactic knee braces, functional types in particular.

**Keywords:** Survey; prophylactic bracing; functional knee brace; NCAA football