

Are Schools Risking Students' Health with Synthetic Turf?

Most people assume synthetic turf is safe because so many schools and colleges have it—but many of those decisions were based on obsolete and incomplete information from the people selling the turf.

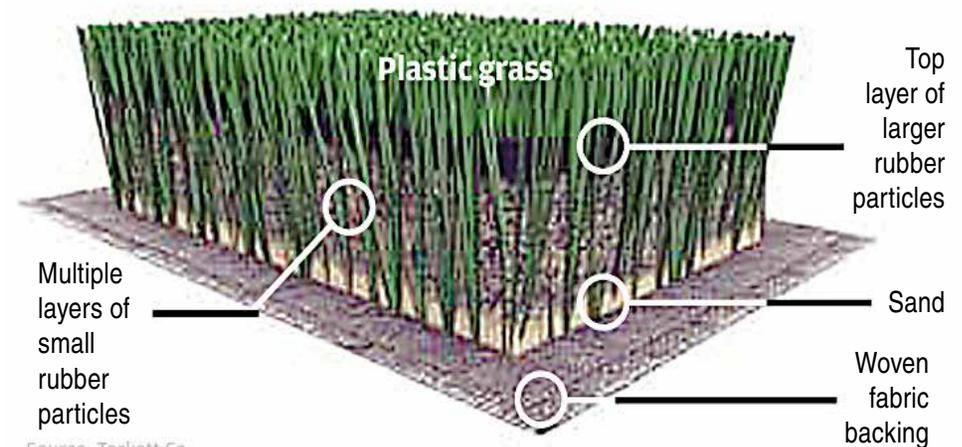
Two years ago, EPA withdrew assurances of safety and called for new studies. Health experts, toxicologists, athletic coaches, and players have called for action to protect the future health of students and athletes.

A student at Lehigh University researched whether synthetic turf can cause or contribute to a health problems, and we found strong indications that it does—including dozens of soccer goalies with lymphoma and other cancers apparently caused by playing on synthetic turf every day. There are few absolute answers—but many reasons for concern. Here's what we learned:

- Most fields support the 'grass' with 'crumb rubber'—made from thousands of used tires and containing a variety of compounds that can cause illness, cancer, birth defects, and reproductive disorders.
- It can take years or decades for problems to develop, so most health impacts are hidden until it is too late.
- The plastic grass is treated with chemicals to retard flame—but these chemicals also can cause cancer, birth defects, and reproductive disorders.
- 'Turf burns' are common—and if they aren't treated promptly and properly, they can lead to permanent scars as well as antibiotic-resistant staph infections.
- In hot weather, turf becomes dangerously hot and emits even more toxic vapors.
- Most professional and college-level athletes prefer natural turf.

What's in Artificial Turf?

Artificial turf is made up of plastic 'grass' held in place by layers of rubber crumbs and sand.



What about industry claims that there is nothing to worry about?



1. There is no proof that synthetic turf fields are safe — the turf industry makes lots of claims, but they rely on studies that did not consider cumulative, long-term impacts of real-world use.
2. Crumb rubber contains a variety of compounds known to cause serious long-term health problems.
3. Children, who are more vulnerable than adults, are exposed over a period of years to low-levels of multiple toxins via multiple pathways.
4. It can take years or decades after exposure for health problems to develop.
5. There are so many ‘red flags’ that EPA withdrew its assurances of safety and said more studies are needed before these fields can be considered safe.

Why are schools willing to take a chance on students’ future health — based on claims that have never been proven and are no longer supported by the EPA?

Good intentions don’t make synthetic turf safe. To protect children’s future health, parents should not allow them to play on synthetic turf and should insist that existing synthetic turf be removed as soon as possible. Those who have no choice but to play on synthetic turf should take steps to minimize possible health impacts (see website for more information).

LINKS FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- ‘How Safe Is the Artificial Turf Your Child Plays On?’, NBC News in-depth report on the epidemic of lymphoma among soccer goalies
nbcnews.com/news/investigations/how-safe-artificial-turf-your-child-plays-n220166
- ‘Artificial Turf’, the definitive report by Environment & Human Health
www.ehhi.org/reports/turf/turf_report07.pdf
- ‘What to Know About Artificial Turf Fields’, Mt. Sinai School of Medicine
www.sustainlv.org/wp-content/uploads/SynTurf-factsheet-Mt-Sinai-2011.pdf
- **Additional links & information:**
www.sustainlv.org/focus_on/synthetic-turf-overview