

Synthetic Turf Questions and Answers

Do synthetic fields pose any health risks or environmental hazards?

A large body of national and international research studies exists commissioned by government health agencies, universities, independent laboratories, health and safety study groups, and environmental organizations regarding potential health and environmental hazards of synthetic fields.

The bottom line, current research on the newer generation synthetic turf systems concludes, overwhelmingly, the use of artificial turf and crumb rubber have no known health or environmental risks.

Attached are several web links of recent studies and reports conducted to support this claim.

What are the added benefits of synthetic surfacing vs. natural grass?

There are thousands of synthetic fields in use worldwide. Here are just a few good reasons why:

- The demand for year around sports fields continues to grow. Synthetic fields allow for year around maximum sports program use in all but the most severe weather conditions. They provide a safe alternative to natural grass fields which cannot stand-up to heavy program use in moist climate conditions such as exists in the Pacific Northwest
- Hundreds of thousands of rubber tires are kept out of landfills and dumps
- Synthetic turf requires no harmful pesticides or herbicides, which can leach into groundwater
- Synthetic turf does not require irrigation, saving one of our most precious natural resources, fresh water

Are synthetic turf fields safer for play than natural grass fields?

A 5-year research study of high schools conducted by Texas A&M University and published in the *The American Journal of sports medicine* indicates injuries sustained on synthetic turf fields are less severe and have a quicker recovery time than those suffered on natural grass fields. From a project specific perspective, the Newport Hills soccer field is closed to organized sports each year from mid-fall through early summer because existing field conditions have deteriorate and are considered unsafe for play.

Are there limitations or special rules regarding the use of synthetic turf fields?

The vast majority of sports and outdoor activities played on natural grass can also be played on synthetic turf. But there are a few special rules that apply to synthetic surfaces that may limit some usage. These include no in-ground staking/poles/accessories, no painting of lines or markings, no dogs, and no metal cleats.

If you would like to review the research here are several links that may prove helpful:

Artificial Turf: Environmental and Occupational Disease and Epidemiology

www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/eode/eode-turf.shtml

Are the benefits worth the environmental and health risks?

http://www.childrenenvironment.org/pdf/turf_presentation.pdf

Potential health and environmental effects linked to artificial turf systems

<http://www.iss.de/conferences/Dresden%202006/technical/NBI%20Engelsk.pdf>

A survey of microbial populations in In-filled synthetic turf systems

<http://cropsoil.psu.edu/mcnitt/microbial/discussioncfm>

Evaluation of health effects of recycled waste tires in playground and track products

<http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/Tires/Pubs.htm> (scroll research papers)

Initial evaluation of potential human health risks associated with playing on synthetic turf fields on Bainbridge Island

<http://www.syntheticurfCouncil.org>.

Evaluation of playing surface characteristics of various In-filled systems

<http://cropsoilpsu.edu/mcnitt/infill8.cfm>

An assessment of chemical leaching, releases to air and temperature at crumb rubber synthetic fields

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/46856.html>

Consumer products safety commission findings

<http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/prerel/prhtml08/08348.html>