

Synthetic Turf Athletic Fields

Frequently Asked Questions

- How does synthetic turf impact the environment?
 - Synthetic turf has a number of positive impacts on the environment that vary based on the climate. In New England, significant positive impacts include water conservation and improved water quality.
 - On average during a warm New England summer, a natural grass athletic field uses between 400 and 500 gallons of water per day in order to maintain a healthy playing surface. With exception of certain organic infill products synthetic turf does not require daily watering in New England.
 - Synthetic turf does not require supplemental nutrients such as fertilizers and pesticides which are often used on natural grass athletic fields to promote growth and regeneration of the living plants. Excessive use of these supplements can have a lasting negative impact on the environment as a certain amount of the chemicals are washed away during rain storms and carried into local waterways.

- Is Synthetic Turf Safe?
 - Numerous independent organizations, state and federal agencies have validated the safety of synthetic turf fields.
 - In October 2010, the California Office of Environmental Assessment completed its multi-year study of air quality above crumb rubber infilled synthetic turf, and bacteria in the turf, and reported that there were no public health concerns.
 - In July 2010, the Connecticut Department of Public Health announced that a new study of the risks to children and adults playing on synthetic turf fields containing crumb rubber infill shows "no elevated health risks."
 - The California EPA released a report dated July 2009 which indicated there is a negligible human health risk from inhaling the air above synthetic turf.
 - Independent tests conducted by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and New York State Department of Health, released in May 2009, proved there were no significant health concerns at synthetic turf fields.
 - In July 2008, a U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission staff report approved the use of synthetic turf by children and people of all ages.

- Is crumb rubber infill safe?
 - Recent concerns have been raised in Washington State regarding soccer athletes and cancer. Numerous state and public agencies and independent health organizations have concluded that there is no positive correlation between rubber and cancer. The EPA is due to release further studies and research regarding the topic in the next few years. Crumb rubber is safe for use on athletic fields but there are also numerous other options for infill available.

- What are the concerns with heat and synthetic turf?
 - During the summer months on hot sunny days, when synthetic turf is exposed to direct sunlight, synthetic turf fields have reported surface temperatures significantly hotter than the surface temperature of a natural turf field. In such conditions, many coaches will schedule practices and games for the cooler times of day, and limit the number and duration of practices. They should also follow the heat-acclimation guidelines published by the National Athletic Trainers' Association.

- What impact does synthetic turf have on playing time
 - Synthetic turf playing fields exponentially increase playing and practice time because they can be used daily and in all types of weather, without worry of damage. Playability is enhanced as the fields remain uniform and consistent, season after season. In addition, while turf grass managers recommend against using a natural field for more than 20 – 24 hours per week or 680 – 816 hours per year for a three-season window, synthetic turf can be utilized around 3,000 hours per year with no "rest" required.

- How does synthetic turf compare to natural grass on player injury rates?
 - Three 2010 long-term studies published by researchers from Norway and Sweden compared acute injuries on synthetic turf and natural grass. The studies examined the type, location and severity of injuries sustained by hundreds of players during thousands of hours of matches and training over a four to five year period. Many types of acute injuries to men and women soccer players, particularly knee injury, ankle sprain, muscle strains, concussions, MCL tears, and fractures were evaluated. The researchers concluded that the injury risk of playing on artificial turf is no greater than playing on natural grass.