



## Health & Safety Considerations for Synthetic Turf

Synthetic turf installations have grown in Massachusetts, to the point where almost every town north of Boston has one or more turf fields. It is easier to maintain and less harmful to the environment. Synthetic turf does not require mowing, line painting, irrigation, aeration, over-seeding, fertilizing, liming, or the spreading of herbicides and pesticides. Unlike natural grass, it does not need to rest and rejuvenate and can be used in wet weather because of a highly engineered drainage system. Turf can handle as much running, jumping, kicking, throwing, and catching as our youth programs can muster.

Despite all the installations in our area and across the country, the debate continues surrounding the health and safety of crumb rubber, the material used to create the soft playing surface. Crumb rubber comes from tires (one multi-purpose field keeps 20,000 tires out of landfills). It has been studied extensively over the past two decades. The consistent conclusion of peer-reviewed, scientific research is that there is no evidence that playing on synthetic turf has adverse health effects and no evidence of any threat to the environment. Nevertheless, there are other infill materials available if Boxford prefers an alternative to crumb rubber.

With regards to discussions about infections, studies have shown that sunlight kills all MRSA bacteria within a few hours. Natural and synthetic turf fields have the same level of bacteria, which is very low. The key in any situation and on any surface is to clean the cut as soon as possible. With proper cleaning and hygiene, an abrasion received on natural or synthetic turf should not lead to infection.

Frequency of injury has also been carefully studied, with some reports showing fewer incidents on turf. Both synthetic turf and natural grass fields need to be managed to maintain a safe measure of hardness. Synthetic fields can be softened by adding infill. Bringing a natural grass field back to safe GMAX levels ("cushioning") is a difficult and expensive undertaking.

Every resident should have the opportunity to formulate their own perspective. Here are links to studies frequently referenced by other towns that have embarked on synthetic turf projects. Please review as much material as you feel is necessary to make an informed decision. A good place to start is the Mass Dept of Public Health website. (<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/environmental/exposure/faq-artificial-turf-0615.pdf>)

*Note: Many youth sports programs will be sharing the turf field at Boxford Common. Their weekly use will be significantly less than those tested in the research studies.*

### ATTACH

Turf Info - Mass Dept Health FAQ

Turf Info - Connecticut Dept Public Health

Turf Info - Enviro Science

Turf Info - Teter Engineering

Turf Info - Document from Lincoln BoH (testing groundwater)

stma.org - for info on all athletic field surfaces

