Is Installing Artificial Turf a Good Idea?
by Victoria Tsai and Judson Sonett

Light bulbs, plastics, microwaves, and synthetic fabrics are all inventions that replaced natural materials. In recent years, a new type of synthetic material is being increasingly used in the nation’s parks and sports fields. Artificial turf is the new fad, and more stadiums, schools, and local parks are switching to it. This material offers many benefits, including extending sports seasons, eliminating mud, saving water, and lowering maintenance costs. However, how much are people willing to sacrifice for these benefits?

For all its benefits, artificial turf has a dark side. It is expensive to install, and even worse, it is a major contributor to environmental damage, long-term health issues, and a rise in sports related injuries. Turf for an average football field costs approximately one million dollars. The maintenance is six thousand dollars a year, but if a school takes money away from student education to fund the installation, it is not worth the sacrifice. In addition, turf damages the environment. If there is a downpour or a storm, chemicals like chromium, arsenic, and cadmium can leak from the turf and be absorbed into the ground and pollute runoff (Claudio 5). Artificial turf does not expel oxygen like natural grass, so it is not environmentally friendly.

Moreover, the filling used for the artificial turf is unsafe. Crumb rubber used to fill the turf is made of shredded tires containing chemicals that are released in the air (Claudio 4). Over time, those chemicals can trigger asthma. In addition, people with allergies may have a reaction to latex tires used for the crumb rubber.
Finally, there are higher risks of injuries on turf fields. Abrasions are more common (Brown 6), and with these wounds, the risk of getting infections is higher. Also, wearing regular cleats in artificial turf can raise chances of many different injuries, including tearing of the anterior cruciate ligament (ACT) which can be a career ending injury. People will have to invest in turf shoes in addition to their cleats for playing sports in regular grass (Soccerturf 1). If a school wants to remove the turf, natural grass will not be able to grow on top of it.

It is unfortunate that many artificial turf companies do not take these concerns into account. Although there are benefits to using artificial turf, the consequences of using this material are far too great. It will ultimately cause much more harm than good. More pressure should be put on the companies to make the products safer. Until then, artificial turf should not be installed. It is no doubt aesthetically pleasing to watch a football game in December played on an emerald-green field; human safety and the health of the environment should outweigh those aesthetics.

Works Cited


Brown, Margo. “Safety Study of Artificial Turf Containing Crumb Rubber Infill Made from Recycled Tires: Measurements of Chemicals and Particulates in the Air, Bacteria in the Turf, and Skin Abrasion Caused by Contact with the Surface.” CalRecycle California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery. N.p.,


This editorial received honorable mention from *The New York Times* in the paper’s first student editorial contest. To be a finalist, editorials had to have “not only clear arguments and carefully chosen evidence” but also “claims in original, persuasive voices.”