



1191 Ridge Road • North Haven, CT 06473

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Statement to the Groton Athletic Fields Task Force
Town of Groton, CT
November 2, 2020

My name is Patricia Taylor. I am Director of the Plastics and Waste Project for Environment and Human Health, Inc.

Environment and Human Health, Inc. (EHHI) is a ten-member, nonprofit, science-based organization composed of physicians, public health professionals and policy experts. The organization is dedicated to protecting human health from environmental harms through research, education, and the promotion of sound public policies.

EHHI is not a membership organization. All our support comes from foundations and a few committed individuals. We do not receive any funds from businesses or corporations.

EHHI is submitting the following comments, along with two additional statements about synthetic turf fields and their infills, which are crumb rubber infills or other infills that are often used in these fields. One statement is by Nancy Alderman, President of EHHI, about so-called *alternative* infills; and the other statement is a letter from EHHI health professionals, presenting their concerns about the health risks that synthetic turf fields pose.

Synthetic turf fields are composed of acres of plastic backed by latex and rubber pads that are glued together with polyurethane adhesive. The blades of plastic grass are often infilled with tens of thousands of pounds of shredded waste rubber tires, known as crumb rubber. EPDM and SBR rubbers are also promoted, along with other untested infills that are not in keeping with a sustainable Groton.

By installing artificial fields, school-aged children and athletes will be exposed daily to many chemicals of concern. The infills are loose and granular, and small pieces of material will travel into cars and homes on the skin, socks, and clothes of those who have played on the fields.

A decision to install artificial fields will have environmental and health consequences. These fields have an 8 to 10 year life span, and at the present time there is no facility in the United States that can recycle synthetic turf fields when they wear out (see <https://www.ydr.com/in-depth/news/2019/11/18/old-artificial-turf-fields-pose-huge-waste-problem-environmental-concerns-across-nation/2314353001/>). Therefore, discarded worn-out fields will enter the plastic waste stream in Connecticut.

It is EHHI's position that there is no safer surface for students and athletes to play upon than grass.

Submitted by Patricia Taylor
Director of the Plastics and Waste Project
Environment and Human Health, Inc.
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Environment and Human Health, Inc. (EHHI)

EHHI Statement on Issues with Alternative Infills for Synthetic Turf Fields

By Nancy Alderman, September 28, 2015

1. None of the alternate infills for synthetic turf fields, other than crumb rubber, have been independently tested. No one really knows whether they are harmful to lungs or to any other part of the human body.
2. Because synthetic turf fields catch fire - the fields are made from petrochemicals - the fields are often impregnated with flame retardants -- and these flame retardants are often toxic.
3. Unlike grass fields, synthetic turf fields have been known to promote MRSA infections -- so the synthetic turf fields are usually treated with antimicrobials to keep players' infections down.
4. The green plastic carpet has its own set of health issues as it is acres of plastic looking "grass." With hundreds of students and athletes playing on it day after day, the plastic fibers wear down and produce dust that also becomes respirable.
5. It has always been the coaches and athletic departments that have promoted synthetic turf fields across the nation. These are wonderful people - dedicated to their students and athletes -- but they are ill-equipped to deal with the health issues these fields present. Meanwhile, industry drowns out scientists, health professionals and parents who understand the dangers these fields present. Government has been complacent with industry -- and that is the crime that continues to be perpetrated on our children. There is no safer surface for athletes to play on than grass.



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**Environment and Human Health, Inc. (EHHI)
New Haven Register Letter to the Editor**

Safest material for athletes is grass

<http://www.nhregister.com/opinion/20160102/letter-to-the-editor-safest-material-for-athletes-is-grass>

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We as physicians and health professionals understand that many schools and towns are sensing that they need more playing time on their athletic fields — and as a way of addressing this issue they are turning to installing synthetic turf fields.

Synthetic turf fields are usually infilled with 40,000 used tires that make up the crumb rubber infill.

What concerns us as physicians and health professionals is that there is mounting evidence that the rubber tire infill material can be carcinogenic and therefore there could be a health risk for those students and athletes who play on these fields.

We worry that it is possible, in light of the increasing evidence that is being revealed, that students who play on synthetic turf fields may be at risk for health problems. Many of the students who play on these fields have now played on synthetic turf fields for years — thus continuing to play on them simply adds to the students' exposures. The rubber tire infill has been shown to be particularly dangerous when it is in inside facilities or covered over, because the chemicals concentrate and create greater exposures.

The safest material for students and athletes to play on is grass. We believe that what has happened with synthetic turf fields has been a massive failure of government to protect the public by allowing shredded-up waste tires to get into the market place and put where children, students and athletes play. As a result, a generation of children and athletes has been put at risk.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Signed,

Pinar Kodaman, MD, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology and Reproductive Sciences, Yale University School of Medicine

Hugh Taylor, MD, Anita O'Keefe Young Professor and Chair of the Yale Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Reproductive Sciences

Robert LaCamera, MD, Clinical Professor of Pediatrics, Yale University School of Medicine

Susan Addiss MPH, MURs, past Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Public Health

Andrea Asnes, MD, MSW, Associate Professor of Pediatrics at the Yale School of Medicine

Nancy Alderman, MES, President of Environment and Human Health, Inc.