

FAQs: Synthetic Turf Use in Arlington

What is synthetic turf? Are there synthetic turf fields in Arlington?

- Synthetic turf is a grass-like surface material made of synthetic fibers that replicates natural grass. It is commonly used in athletic fields and playgrounds around the country.
- Arlington County has 15 synthetic turf fields. Twelve of these fields use styrene butadiene rubber (SBR) made from recycled tires. The other three fields use ethylene propylene diene monomer (EPDM) as the infill. EPDM is a synthetic rubber manufactured for the purpose of synthetic turf infill. The fields at Williamsburg Middle School and Greenbrier Park use EPDM as infill.
- Arlington County has three playgrounds with synthetic turf surfacing; none of these turfs use an infill.

Why does Arlington use synthetic turf?

Synthetic turf fields have many advantages:

- Synthetic turf has a uniform and level playing surface that can be used all year round offering a high quality of play.
- Synthetic turf fields do not need to be mowed, watered or fertilized.
- Synthetic turf offers enhanced accessibility to more teams and greater play due to the increased playtime and all-weather surface.

What health concerns have been raised about synthetic turf fields?

Concerns about synthetic turf fields include:

- Synthetic turf surfaces can give off more heat. This increases the need for athletes to stay hydrated to prevent heat-related illness.
- "Turf burn" skin abrasions may occur if athletes fall and slide on synthetic turf.
- Recent news articles and television news reports have raised concern about possible cancer risk among people who play on synthetic turf crumb rubber infill.
- The Northern Virginia Health Directors and the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) have found no evidence of increased pediatric cancer incidence in Northern Virginia compared to the entire Commonwealth of Virginia and to the United States as a whole in the time periods before the introduction of crumb rubber turf infill and after the introduction of crumb rubber infill.
- In response to the NBC News story of October 8, 2014, the State of Washington Department of Health found less cancer among soccer players than expected based on rates of cancer among Washington residents of the same ages. They also found that soccer players or goalkeepers in Washington are not at increased risk of cancer compared to the general population. They also stated that the currently available research does not suggest that synthetic turf presents a significant health risk.
- Even though there is no current evidence to link crumb rubber with cancer, Arlington County continues to monitor studies of synthetic turf infills and seek guidance from national public health agencies on selection of infills and potential health risks.

How can I keep myself or my child healthy while playing on synthetic turf?

Keep yourself healthy by taking the same steps you use when playing on natural grass:

- Stay hydrated, especially in the summer. Rest if you feel dizzy or too warm, and remember to take breaks in play.
- Clean any scrapes as quickly as possible. Cover any scrapes, burns, or open wounds before playing.
- Wash your hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds after playing on synthetic turf. Showering after play is also recommended.
- Do not eat while on the synthetic turf.
- Wear athletic shoes while playing on the synthetic turf. Do not play in bare feet.

Where can I go for additional information?

Call Arlington County Department of Parks and Recreation at 703-228-7529 or visit the websites below.

References

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