

**Ever wonder if that pretty green turf field has any downsides?
Here are 5 things every parent should know about synthetic turf**

1. **HEAT.** Synthetic turf regularly reaches temperatures of 120-180 degrees. This is hot enough to melt sneakers, burn skin, and increase the risk of heat stroke, especially in children whose bodies have more difficulty regulating temperature.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/02656736.2019.1605096>

<https://www.safehealthyplayingfields.org/heat-levels-synthetic-turf>

2. **TOXINS.** Synthetic **plastic** grass and infill contain numerous hazardous chemicals, such as butadiene, PFAS, lead and other metals known to damage a child's developing nervous system. These chemicals can be inhaled or absorbed through the skin.

<https://icahn.mssm.edu/files/ISMMS/Assets/Departments/Environmental%20Medicine%20and%20Public%20Health/CEHC/Infographic-%20Artificial%20Turf.pdf>

<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/hsph-in-the-news/pfas-health-risks-underestimated/>

Wright, Robert, MD MPH, Evans, Sarah, PhD MPH, Mt. Sinai Children's Environmental Health Center Testimony Before Connecticut General Assembly, Feb. 3, 2016.

3. **INJURY.** Long-term studies of NCAA and NFL players have shown a greater risk of serious injury for players. The Baltimore Ravens replaced their synthetic turf field with natural turf due to these and other concerns and demand from both players and coaches for natural grass. FIFA does not permit tournament play on synthetic turf. Only five MLB stadiums have synthetic turf today.

<https://sportsfieldmanagementonline.com/2020/01/03/natural-grass-and-synthetic-turf-injury-research/11008/>

4. **COST.** A synthetic turf field costs about \$1.3 million and only lasts 8-12 years before needing to be replaced. Far greater cost than the installation of a well-designed natural grass field with good drainage.

5. **WASTE.** Synthetic turf fields generate 440,000 pounds of hazardous waste and in Baltimore County our sole landfill is already overburdened.

<https://www.sierraclub.org/maryland/synthetic-turf>

What Can You Do?

Share your concerns with other parents.

Lobby for well-designed natural grass fields for play.

Talk to your principal, PTA, Board of Education, council member and county executive.

What are the alternatives?

Natural grass fields are preferred to synthetic for the above reasons. It costs less to install, and costs about the same to maintain. Bermudagrass or Kentucky Bluegrass are good options because they are fast-growing, resistant to weeds, and tolerate high traffic, full sun and drought.