



Artificial Turf  
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## Athletes concerned about safety of artificial turf



By Marianne Dimain Reporter  
Global News

TORONTO – A group of athletes in the U.S. are ringing alarm bells about potentially toxic components found in rubberized artificial turf.

Thirty-eight American soccer players diagnosed with cancer have reportedly come forward questioning the link between their diagnosis and years of playing on artificial turf covered with crumb rubber.

“It’s very reasonable to suspect that there’s harm being done because of the nature of the crumb rubber,” said Gideon Forman, the executive director of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment.

Crumb rubber turf is made of thousands of recycled tires which are then pulverized into tiny rubber crumbs. The black grains are then poured between the blades of synthetic grass which helps cushion athlete’s falls and prevent concussions.

Experts warn the crumbs should be a concern since the rubber contains potentially toxic components that could accidentally be ingested.

“Butadiene is a carcinogen related to blood cancers like leukemia,” said Forman. “Styrene is harmful to the nervous system so they’re both quite worrying.”

Crumb rubber turf is used in parks, schools and sports complexes all across the country. The Toronto District School Board says artificial turf has been installed at 15 elementary schools and three of its secondary schools since 2003. Of those, all but four use the rubberized infill.

There have been no studies that link crumb rubber to cancer but the group environmental defence says studies should specifically look at the effects of ingesting the rubber over a long period of time.

“What if you’re an athlete constantly diving, falling on that substance and you were to actually get some of that substance on your hands, on your skin, and then again ingesting that later if you’re eating or drinking,” said Maggie Macdonald. “So more research needs to be done.”

But the synthetic turf council says there is no proof crumb rubber can make you sick. Over the past two decades it says more than sixty independent studies and reports looked into the health effects of crumb rubber, including cancer.

In a statement the council said “The preponderance of evidence shows no negative health effects associated with crumb rubber in synthetic turf.”

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**Marianne Dimain**



## Reporter

Marianne Dimain is a reporter with Global News in Toronto.

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