Turf has evolved in our community and more and more athletes prefer to play on turf. With the smooth surface, no holes or mud patches, and very clear lining on the field, it is understandable that kids enjoy playing on the turf. However, the rubber black dots on the artificial turf, are causing cancer and diseases in many athletes. Many of them are diving, falling or being pushed down on the turf, thus getting the turf pebbles in their mouth, nose, eyes and open cuts. It has been proven that there are ways to reduce the bacteria on the turf, but the recurring question is, are towns and school taking care and properly cleaning the turf?

Today, over 3.5 million kids receive medical attention from playing sports (Stop injuries). A handful of these players are getting cancer or become very sick from the bad bacteria that is on the turf. These athletes come in contact with the turf pebbles when they are pushed, and when the pebbles are in their mouth, or in their eyes. Amy Griffin, a former professional soccer player and now a coach at Washington University has created a list within the last couple of years. According to her studies, 220 athletes reported being treated for cancer. Of the 220, 166 were soccer players, and 102 of them were goalkeepers (Griffin). Goalkeepers have a higher risk because they are more exposed to turf since they are always diving on the ground making saves. Griffin’s list was an eye opener to most teams and health offices proving that this is a serious issue.

This issue with the turf, is not only taking a toll on the kids that are battling the sickness, but it also is making the colleges and professional teams change where they play. Alex Morgan, women’s soccer player on the US National Team, along with other national players, filed a lawsuit against FIFA claiming gender discrimination. The men’s World Cup is always played on grass, and the women always play on turf (Das). 47% of D-1 schools had natural fields and the rest being turf, but two years ago this changed and 55% of D-1 schools switched back to natural grass (Bagnato). Tennessee was the first college to originally put in a turf field, and has gone back to the natural grass. Nine “big name” schools that still have grass fields are, Iowa State University, Northwestern University, University of Colorado, University of Florida, Michigan State University, Mississippi State University, University of Virginia, Virginia Tech, and Texas A&M University. These colleges said that yes, they have to maintain the grass, and a lot of work goes into it, but they have to do the same with turf, and not properly maintaining the turf may be a reason people are getting sick. Having these 9 colleges switch back to grass, shows that it is beneficial to have a grass field. If the government can find a way to fix the bacteria building up on the turf, then players can still play on them while being safe.

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Maintenance can be a huge factor when considering why kids are getting cancer from the turf. Are schools and towns properly taking care of the turf? Maybe not, and this is something that the government is looking into. According to Synlawn.com “Field maintenance is required every day, and it is as simple as dragging a machine across the field” (synlawn). The equipment that should be purchased to maintain this turf and keep bacteria off, are the following: Hydraulic Sweeper, Drag Brush, or the FieldTurf RT Groomer. These “machines” are as simple as a rake that is attached to the back of a cart, but it can make a huge difference in the players safety. The Drag Brush would be the first part, it is used to level the infield and move the pebbles around so that there aren’t pebbles sitting right on top of each other. The Drag Brush simply brushes the extra pebbles off the field. Raking should be done every 4-6 weeks and brushing should be done 6-8 weeks (fieldturf). Next, the Fieldturf RT groomer has a front with and aerating system and the back has a raking part, that grooms the grass blades. Finally, the Hydraulic sweeper is done after all the maintenance is completed, and it is the final sweep. It makes sure nothing is on the field that isn’t supposed to be there when the players play. After everything is finished, this turf company recommend spraying the field with plain water. By using these materials listed, there is a chance that towns, schools and anyone one else who owns turf can reduce the bacteria that is sitting on the turf.

A number of players are being diagnosed with cancer and sickness such as MRSA, and are being put in danger when they play on the turf. Diving for the ball, slide tackling, falling, playing with the curb rubber, and getting the rubber in your cut, mouth, or eye is all easy wasy to be exposed to germs. Griffin, the former National Team soccer player, and now a coach at Washington University has done research to prove that there is an issue with the turf. The number of athletes diagnosed with cancer continues to grow as student athletes continue to play on turf fields. Some facilities are eliminating the problem by returning their fields to grass. If a facility is going to keep a turf field, they need to maintain it to an
acceptable level so that athletes are safe and healthy.

*Morgan O'Neill is a student at Morristown High School

Works Cited


Turf war is a mini game where guilds fight against each other in round based guild PvP. Each week all guilds are divided into groups of 10 and put on maps where they fight each other in Turf War. The goal of Turf War is to control as many quality fields as possible at the end of each day. Each Turf War lasts for six days, followed by a 24h break before guilds are put onto new maps. Turf War is a reality television series that is a spinoff from Yard Crashers. The show is hosted by licensed contractor Matt Blashaw and began airing March 8, 2010 on the DIY Network. Season two began airing on April 11, 2011. Ahmed Hassan, the original host of the show, was replaced at the end of 2011 by Matt Blashaw. Turf War on IMDb.