Get the Facts: Synthetic Turf

Although use of synthetic turf can have many benefits for schools, it can pose health and safety problems for children and student athletes.

Features of synthetic turf:
- can be used year round and in most weather
- needs less watering than natural grass
- uses no fertilizers or pesticides
- provides an even playing surface
- requires an infill to keep grass blades upright

Features of natural infills:
- recyclable on site
- reduced surface temperature
- stays on the field
- biodegradable and non-toxic
- can contain cork, coconut fibres, or sand

Dangers of crumb rubber:
- contains toxic chemicals including benzothiazole and carbon black
- reaches unsafe temperatures (200 degrees on 98 degree day)
- causes abrasions on skin
- contains latex, an allergen
- granules stick to skin, clothes

Reducing exposure to toxins:
- Limit play time on hot days, monitor for heat-induced illness
- Remove rubber pellets from clothing, bodies, equipment
- Wash hands thoroughly before eating
- Never eat or lie down on the field

The most common infill used with synthetic turf is crumb rubber, made with recycled tires. Crumb rubber contains benzothiazole, which “exerts acute toxicity and is a respiratory irritant and a dermal sensitizer.”