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Study Finds No Greater Injury Risk on Artificial Playing Surfaces

No statistically significant difference in professional soccer player injury rates on artificial, natural turf

NEW ORLEANS—New research presented today at the 2014 Annual Meeting of the [American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons](#) (AAOS) found no greater injury risk for athletes playing on artificial playing surfaces.

The use of artificial playing surfaces at sport venues has increased significantly in recent years, primarily due to the advantages of artificial turf over natural grass: longer playing hours, lower maintenance costs and greater resilience to harsh weather conditions. Despite these advantages, many elite professional soccer teams are reluctant to install artificial turf because of a perception that injuries occur more often on these types of surfaces.

In the study, "[Safety of Third Generation Artificial Turf in Male Elite Professional Soccer Players,](#)" Italian researchers reviewed injuries involving players in the top Italian football (soccer) league during the 2011-2012 season.

A total of 2,580 hours of play were recorded (1,270 hours on artificial turf and 1,310 on grass). For every 1,000 hours of play there were 23 injuries recorded on artificial surfaces and 20 on grass, with muscle strains being the most common injury (13 on artificial turf, 14 on grass). The authors of the study do not consider the injury rates between the two surfaces to be statistically significant, as only three injuries per 1,000 hours of play were attributable to artificial surfaces.

The study authors concluded that there are no major differences between the nature and causes of injuries sustained on artificial turf and those that occur on natural grass surfaces.

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