

Further laboratory testing has shown that lead can be dissolved from artificial turf fibers and turf field dust under conditions that simulate the human digestive process, leaving the lead available for the body to absorb, Health and Senior Services Commissioner Heather Howard said today.

The amount of lead dissolved from turf dust and some turf fibers was similar to that seen in studies of household dust and soil samples where the same testing method was used, the test results showed.

“Lead is known to harm children’s health and neurologic development. These test results show there is reason for concern about the potential for lead exposure from artificial turf fields that contain lead,” Commissioner Howard said.

“It’s a special concern for children who are already exposed to lead, possibly by living in a home with lead paint. This could add to the lead levels already in their bodies,” added State Epidemiologist and Deputy Commissioner Dr. Eddy Bresnitz.

The Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) continues to recommend that turf field managers and consumers who use residential turf products first determine if their turf includes fibers with lead in them. Earlier DHSS testing of a limited number of artificial turf samples found elevated lead levels in products that contain nylon fibers.

The most conservative approach would be to limit access to an artificial turf field that contains lead. Proper maintenance can reduce exposure risk. Field users should wash properly afterward and ensure that their clothing is washed.

Last month, Dr. Bresnitz sent the federal Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) a letter, urging it to investigate the artificial turf used on athletic fields, play areas and in homes after New Jersey testing found very high lead levels in some artificial turf samples. Artificial turf products are distributed nationwide.

Although other studies had shown that lead from lead paint or contaminated soil can be absorbed by the body, it was not known whether someone who accidentally swallowed bits of artificial turf fiber or turf field dust would be similarly at risk.

DHSS arranged for additional testing of lead-containing turf and dust samples. The testing simulated the human digestive process to determine whether, and how much, lead could be dissolved out of the fibers and become available for absorption.

The amount of lead actually absorbed by any individual would vary based on lead particle size, the person’s age and the person’s nutritional status, among other factors.

DHSS has sent the CPSC and the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention a follow-up letter outlining the latest test results. DHSS also urged the agency to continue its turf investigation and to determine the appropriate measures to protect public health nationally.

For more information, please visit the DHSS web site at:  
<http://nj.gov/health/artificialturf/index.shtml>. For more information on lead poisoning, visit our  
Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Page at <http://nj.gov/health/fhs/newborn/lead.shtml>.

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