

Some injuries more common on artificial turf

The National Football League's (NFL) Injury and Safety Panel finds that certain serious knee and ankle injuries happen more often in games played on the most popular brand of artificial turf than on natural grass.

According to a study presented at the 2010 Annual Meeting of the **American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS)**, rates for Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) injuries and eversion ankle sprains (where the foot twists outward) are significantly higher in the National Football League (NFL) games played on FieldTurf, an artificial playing surface, as compared to natural grass.

The study was led by Elliott B. Hershman, MD, Chairman of Orthopaedic Surgery at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York, NY, and Chair of the NFL Injury and Safety Panel. As chair of the panel, Dr. Hershman meets with trainers, team physicians and orthopaedic surgeons who together study injuries in the NFL and look for ways to prevent them.

"These injuries could be happening for myriad reasons, and we need to further explore and initiate research into exactly why this is happening," said Dr. Hershman. "What can be

done to make the [artificial] turf safer? Would different sports, such as soccer or age groups, such as high school football, also sustain more ACL injuries or eversion ankle sprains on FieldTurf? What biomechanics are happening when a player's shoe meets the FieldTurf surface? We need to find answers to these, and other questions," he added.

The data from the study represents NFL game-related injuries that occurred to players during the 2002-2008 football seasons:

- Teams that played on FieldTurf surfaces showed an 88 percent higher ACL injury rate and a 48 percent increase in eversion ankle sprains.
- Per team game, the injury rate was 27 percent higher on FieldTurf surfaces than natural grass surfaces for all reported game-related lower extremity injuries.



Dr. Hershman emphasized that his study only applies to NFL players, and does not offer reasons as to why more injuries occur on FieldTurf. However, the conclusions in the study are clear, and he added "many NFL players prefer FieldTurf because it is softer and more comfortable to land on than other playing surfaces such as natural grass, but the more that NFL players play on this surface, the more prone they are to injury. "It is important for athletes, coaches, athletic trainers, and fans to be aware of this issue."

AAOS

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