

## Queen Creek Fire Department urges safety in the sun

As summer quickly approaches, the Queen Creek Fire Department wants to remind residents about the dangers of sun exposure and ways to stay safe from the sun!

Everyone is at risk to the harmful effects of sun exposure, but some are more at risk than others. People with fair complexions, freckles, blonde or red hair, and blue or grey eyes are more at risk of experiencing damage due to sun exposure.

Repeated sun exposure can cause:

- Aging, drying and wrinkling of the skin
- Skin and lip Cancer
- Eye damage

To protect from the sun's harmful rays:

- Limit time in the sun, especially between 10 am and 4 pm when the sun's rays are the strongest. Sun damage can also take place on cloudy days.
- Wear a hat with a wide brim. The best hats for sun protection cover most of the face, neck and ear areas.
- Cover the body with lightweight clothing- the more coverage the better. Choose loose fitting clothing to allow air movement during hot weather. Darker clothing may also offer more protection than lighter clothing.
- Apply sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher. Put it on before you go outdoors and reapply as required. Make sure the lotion has not expired- it has a shelf life of not more than three years.
- Reflective rays from water can increase the sun's intensity. Reapply sunscreen often when around water.
- Wear sunglasses to filter out ultraviolet rays. Sunglasses are rated for percentage of ultraviolet rays blocked. Select glasses that block 99% or 100% of UV light.

Signs of skin damage requiring medical attention include:

- Asymmetrical moles, especially those with irregular colors, or larger than 1/4 inch
- Elevated crusty sores that bleed and won't heal
- Change in a mole, such as itchiness or pain
- Red, scaly, patches or lumps on the skin
- Small, shiny, pearly bumps on the skin

Research shows a link between sunburns in childhood with an increased risk of melanoma and skin cancer later in life. About 80% of skin cancer can be prevented by protecting skin from the sun's rays. Decrease exposure to the sun in children by:

- Providing play areas in the shade
- Applying sunscreen and sunglasses when outdoors
- Providing clothing and hats that cover the body

Sun damage doesn't take place with one exposure- it starts at a very young age and has a cumulative effect. For more safety tips from the Queen Creek Fire Department, visit [www.queencreek.org](http://www.queencreek.org).