

Sunscreen Controversy

By Denise Dador

March 30, 2006 - In the war against skin cancer, sunscreen is billed as our best defense. But a consumer lawsuit against sunscreen manufacturers claims these products are making false claims and giving people who use them a false sense of security.

The lawsuit says makers such as Coppertone, Hawaiian Tropic, BullFrog and Neutrogena inflate what their products can actually do. But skin cancer experts say it's more a matter of operator error.

The lawsuit focuses on labels that claim the sunscreens protect equally against the sun's harmful UVA and UVB rays. The lawyers filing the suit say the products do not protect against both types of rays effectively. Dermatologists disagree.

"If you have (sunblock) with an SPF 30 or higher it does a pretty good job of protecting you against UVA and UVB," Dr. Daniel Behroozan, of UCLA said.

Dr. Behroozan says you shouldn't consider sunscreen your first line of defense.

To reduce your risk of skin cancer he recommends avoiding the sun from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Make sure you see the words "broad spectrum" on your sunscreen and don't purchase anything less than an SPF of 30. It's also important to reapply sunscreen every two hours, even on cloudy days.