

BELGIUM BANS NONPRESCRIPTION FLUORIDE SUPPLEMENTS

On July 8, 2002, King Albert II of Belgium issued a Royal Decree announcing that the Department of Social Affairs, Public Health, and Environment was repealing its previous policy, still in vogue in the European Union, that allowed nonprescription sales of dietary fluoride supplements and related products to which fluoride was added, such as fluoridated chewing gum. After existing stocks of these products are sold, no future marketing of them will be permitted. However, registered medicines containing fluoride supplements will remain available, but only by prescription.

According to an interview with Public Health Minister Magda Aelvoet published in the July 29, 2002 issue of the Flemish weekly *HUMO*, this decision was reached by recommendation of the Health Council after a number of years of review and study of well-documented research indicating that ingested fluoride has considerable potential for physical and neurological harm and that, moreover, there is little evidence for any significant anti-caries effect from such fluoride.

Because fluoridated toothpastes, mouth rinses, and whiteners are considered to be cosmetics, they do not at present fall under this prohibition.