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## Dental amalgam

### Prohibition to use dental amalgam

From 1 June 2009, it will be prohibited to use dental amalgam in ordinary dental care in Sweden and there will be a total ban to use it in the dental care of children and youth.

In Sweden, the use of amalgam has been reduced by 90 per cent since 1997. In 2003, only 2-5 per cent of all new fillings were made with amalgam. Amalgam is still used for certain groups of patients within the hospital dental care. The Swedish Chemicals Agency (KemI) and the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare have agreed on the necessity of a time-limited exemption to use amalgam in the dental care of adult patients until 30 June 2012, if there are particular medical reasons for doing so and where other treatments have been judged to be insufficient.

It is allowed to place mercury on the market until 31 December 2011 for the manufacture of dental amalgam and amalgam as such is allowed on the market until 31 December 2011.

### Duty to report and to make notes

An obligation for the hospital dental care sector to report their intention to use amalgam will be initiated to evaluate the need for the exemption. The National Board of Health and Welfare must be notified before the first treatment with amalgam starts. There is no requirement to report the next treatments made at the same clinic. Information must be noted on patient particulars, medical reasons for using amalgam and the amount used.

[National Board of Health and Welfare.](#)

### Activities in the EU

About 120 tonnes of mercury are used annually in dental care in the EU. This is the largest single use of mercury in products within the EU.

The European Commission has presented a consultancy report to initiate additional proposals for limitations and measures to implement the mercury strategy that was adopted in 2005.

The conclusions in the report are that further restrictions of dental amalgam and thermometers should be considered. Decisions on measures for sphygmomanometers and barometers could be made as soon as possible without too large consequences for manufacturers or users.

[Commission report: Options for reducing mercury use in products and applications, and the fate of mercury already circulating in society](#)”, September 2008 (PDF, 8 MB).

[Summary of Commission report \(PDF, 344 kB\).](#)

[Read more on the Commission website on mercury.](#)

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## Chemicals policy in Sweden, the EU and globally

If chemicals are not handled safely, they risk damaging both human health and the environment. Supervisory authorities check to see that manufacturers and importers are taking their responsibilities for ensuring that toxic substances are not released into the environment. Consumers also have a responsibility to help prevent damage to humans and the environment by storing and handling chemicals in a safe way in their everyday lives.

The Ministry of the Environment is striving to reduce the use of toxic and ecotoxic chemicals. The most hazardous ones must disappear from the market completely. Work is continuing in Sweden, the EU and globally to ensure safer chemicals management. At the UN meeting of environment ministers in Kenya in February 2003, government representatives from 130 countries gathered together and decided to create a global chemicals strategy by 2005. The meeting was arranged by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

### The Stockholm Convention

In 2003, Sweden made another important contribution to international efforts to prohibit the production and use of chemical substances that persist in the environment, are toxic and can bioaccumulate in living organisms, known as POPs (Persistent Organic Pollutants).

Sweden has a global profile when it comes to efforts to prohibit and restrict POP emissions. This group of chemicals includes some of the worst environmental toxins of our era, such as DDT, PCB and dioxins. At an intergovernmental conference in Stockholm in 2001, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants was signed.

A total of 111 countries and the EU have so far signed the Convention, which was ratified by Sweden in 2002. Sweden was also one of the initiators of the Stockholm Convention.

### New European chemicals legislation

New chemicals legislation is starting to take shape in the EU, the breaking of new ground which Sweden has been advocating for a considerable length of time. From Swedens point of view, the new European chemicals regulatory framework, REACH (Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation of Chemicals), represents an important and necessary development of European legislation in the chemicals field and is a considerable improvement on the existing regulatory system. The system could well

make a valuable contribution to the achievement of the Swedish environmental quality objective of a non-toxic environment.

Under REACH, new and already existing substances will be covered by the same registration, assessment and authorisation system. The substitution principle (constantly replacing hazardous substances with less hazardous ones) and the precautionary principle (used in risk assessment) will be predominant features of the new policy. These measures are also an integral part of Swedish chemicals policy. The EU is planning to set up a European Chemicals Agency to implement REACH. The responsibility for developing knowledge about the properties of chemical substances rests with industry. This information is to be put into a common EU register.

## The Rotterdam Convention

In September 2003, the Swedish Government decided to ratify the Rotterdam Convention on the export and import of hazardous chemicals. The aim of the convention is to provide knowledge about hazardous chemicals that are prohibited or that are subject to stringent restrictions. Under the provisions of the Convention, a recipient country of certain hazardous chemicals must be informed in advance by the exporting country and also approve the import (known as the prior informed consent procedure). The labelling of substances that are prohibited and subject to stringent restrictions must fulfil the requirements laid down for domestic use. The private consumer should also receive better information on hazardous chemical substances. A bill introduced by the Swedish Government proposed that clearer warnings be given in advertisements for chemical products.

The Convention now covers 26 pesticides and five industrial chemicals and work is continuing to add further chemicals. The fact that Sweden has now ratified the Rotterdam Convention means it is legally binding. Sweden has thereby taken an important step regarding global cooperation on the handling of hazardous chemicals. This convention is particularly important for developing countries and their chances of being able to protect the environment and human health.

## Emissions register and information on hazardous chemicals

Both known and unknown chemicals can be found everywhere. Some are much more hazardous than others and can, for example, be carcinogenic or endocrine disruptive. Brominated flame retardants, which are added to furniture, textiles, TV sets, computers, etc., to reduce the risk of fire, constitute such a group.

The National Chemicals Inspectorate was instructed in December 2003 to draft a proposal for a system to provide information on hazardous substances in products. A strategy is to be designed to implement such a common information system throughout the EU. This assignment also included the Chemicals Inspectorate performing a pilot study of a number of product supply chains, e.g. building materials and products that contain brominated flame retardants.

The UN Conference on Environment and Development took place in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, at which the first global initiative to increase the access of the general public to information about local emissions and pollution was taken. The Swedish Chemicals Emissions Register (KUR) is one of the ways the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency is trying to give the general public better access to information on national emissions of chemical substances/groups of substances, as well as fulfilling Sweden's international commitments.

**MINISTRY RESPONSIBLE**

- Ministry of the Environment

**EXTERNAL LINKS**

- Swedish Chemicals Agency

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## PRESS RELEASE

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Ministry of the Environment

## Government bans all use of mercury in Sweden

The Government today decided to introduce a blanket ban on mercury. The ban means that the use of dental amalgam in fillings will cease and that it will no longer be permitted to place products containing mercury on the Swedish market.

"Sweden is now leading the way in removing and protecting the environment from mercury, which is non-degradable. The ban is a strong signal to other countries and a Swedish contribution to EU and UN aims to reduce mercury use and emissions," says Minister for the Environment Andreas Carlgren.

The Government's decision means that products containing mercury may not be placed on the Swedish market. In practice this means that alternative techniques will have to be used in dental care, chemical analysis and the chloralkali industry. The Swedish Chemicals Agency will be authorised to issue regulations on exceptions or grant exemptions in individual cases.

In connection with the Government's decision, waste containing mercury will be disposed of in deep geological repositories in other EU countries. The Swedish market for hazardous waste is small. Last spring, a government inquiry established that there are existing repositories for waste containing mercury in, for example, Germany that more than adequately meet the safety requirements on which Swedish legislation is based. Creating a new Swedish repository would be around 15 times more expensive than depositing waste in existing facilities in the EU. The bodies consulted on this matter shared the inquiry's conclusions.

"By using common solutions and almost forty years of experience of storing mercury in the EU, we are not lowering safety standards. The waste will be transported to a deep geological repository with high safety standards. In accordance with the polluter pays principle, the owners of the waste will be responsible for ensuring that disposal in a repository is arranged and paying for it," says Mr Carlgren.

The disposal possibilities in other EU countries provide better incentives for the desired development of safe, large-scale technologies to stabilise waste containing mercury.

Since the beginning of the 1990s there has been a ban in Sweden on the manufacture and sale of certain products containing mercury, including thermometers and other measuring devices and electronic components.

The new regulations enter into force on 1 June 2009.

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