# Introduction to Vitamins

### 10.1 Introduction to Vitamins

The identification and importance of carbohydrate, protein, lipids, and minerals in the dietary intake were established during the late 17th and early 18th century. However, the discovery of vitamins did not occur until the late 18th and early 19th century. During the end of the 1800’s, scientists conducted deprivation studies where mixtures containing only carbohydrate, protein, lipids, and minerals were fed to animals. The animals did not survive on these diets which indicated the diets were lacking other substances that were essential to health. Referring to these studies, Gerrit Grijns in 1901 stated, “There occur in natural foods, substances, which cannot be absent without serious injury.”1

In 1912, while Casimir Funk studied the disease beriberi and an antiberiberi factor, he found the factor contained an amine group. He hypothesized other conditions such as scurvy, rickets, and pellagra was caused by deficiencies of similar compounds containing amine groups. He thought these substances contained vital amines and coined the name “vitamines.” After it was discovered not all the substances contained an amine group, the “e” was dropped and the term became vitamin.2

References (see more)

* 1. Carpenter KJ. A short history of nutritional science: Part 2 (1885-1912). J Nutr, 2003; 133:975-984.
* 2. Carpenter KJ. A short history of nutritional science: Part 3 (1912-1944). J Nutr. 2003; 133:3023-3032.

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