

Lecturer: OK, we've looked at the history of vitamin⁽¹⁾ and thought about why people take them. We've also considered the reasons why some⁽²⁾ professionals are critical of the vitamin supplement industry. Now work with a partner and discuss the key issues.

Lucy: Sam, shall we work together?

Sam: Sure. Let's go over the history.

Lucy: Well, before the 1900s, when someone became⁽³⁾, and it wasn't clear why, doctors assumed they were suffering from an infection – like a virus.

1 Sam: Or they'd been in contact with something⁽⁴⁾ or harmful. Something they'd handled or eaten. Doctors had no other explanation for it.

Lucy: But in the early 1900s, that changed. That researcher in the
2 US -Joseph Goldberger, – he realised people who basically lived off corn – they were⁽⁵⁾ because they weren't eating anything else.

Sam: Exactly. And other researchers were realising the same thing. Like, in places where people only ate white rice – they were suffering from a⁽⁶⁾ called beriberi.

Lucy: So the researchers concluded that there must be something missing – that the stuff some people were eating had no⁽⁷⁾ value. And from there, researchers began to identify vitamins – like A and B – for the first time.

Sam: A huge scientific breakthrough.

Lucy: So doctors, the public, ...everyone got to hear about vitamins – first that they existed, and second, you needed them to be⁽⁸⁾

Sam: But it was governments that were really worried about vitamin⁽⁹⁾. Certainly in the US and in the UK, at least.

Lucy: What do you mean?

3 Sam: Well, in the 1930s those⁽¹⁰⁾ were worried about people's⁽¹¹⁾ health, because everyone was suddenly buying canned fruit,⁽¹²⁾ butter, meat in tins...that kind of thing. It became very common. And so newspapers were featuring lots of government reports about how serious this was.

Lucy: I see.

Sam: And then, some people saw a business opportunity.

Lucy: Naturally.

Sam: In the 1940s, companies started making and⁽¹³⁾ vitamin supplements in bottles. And they decided the easiest way to market them was to⁽¹⁴⁾ housewives.

Lucy: Why was that? Because housewives were⁽¹⁵⁾ keeping families healthy?

1 Sam: I'd say so. In the weekly magazines housewives read, the companies made⁽¹⁶⁾ claims about what the supplements could do, and they showed pictures of rats in a⁽¹⁷⁾ before and after they were given vitamins. The 'before' pictures showed the rats looking very sick.

Lucy: So they scared the housewives⁽¹⁸⁾ buying their product.

Sam: Apparently.

Lucy: But vitamins were still expensive, weren't they? It wasn't until the 1950s that more people could afford to buy them.