

Reading

✧ Read the text.

Vitamins

If you look up the word VITAMIN in a dictionary you will find that really it is a combination of two words: VITA - life and AMINE - a type of nitrogen compound. The reason for this association with life is quite clear; vitamins are essential to good health and normal physical development. Their existence was discovered in 1911 and since then the existence of twenty-five of these substances has been established, although the function of some of them still remains a mystery. Vitamins are usually identified by letters of the alphabet, according to the order in which they were discovered. They are divided into two groups: Those soluble in fat, and those in water. If you read on you will find specific information about a number of vitamins or vitamin complexes.

Vitamin A

This vitamin includes at least four fat-soluble substances which are found in: milk, cream, butter, eggs, fish-liver oils and vegetables. If we did not have sufficient amounts of this vitamin then, as children, our growth would be affected and, as adults, we would not develop defences against infectious diseases. Also, our skin would not be soft and our eyes could not adjust to darkness.

Vitamin B Complex

This group is comprised of more than twelve identified water-soluble vitamins.

20 *Vitamin B1*

This vitamin is found in: yeast, wheat germ, whole grains, cereals, nuts, milk, eggs, liver, pork and vegetables. However, if we cook food for too long the vitamin B1 is eliminated. If we did not get enough of this vitamin we would suffer from loss of appetite, nervous disorders and tiredness.

25 *Vitamin B2 (Riboflavin)*

This vitamin can be obtained from: meat, liver, fish, poultry, vegetables, eggs, milk, yeast and wheat-germ. If we suffered from a deficiency of this vitamin our growth, digestion, use of oxygen and eyes would all be affected.

30 *Vitamin C*

This water-soluble vitamin is obtainable from liver, fruit and fresh vegetables. If we did not receive this vitamin we would suffer from scurvy, a disease which used to be common among sailors who spent long periods at sea without eating fresh fruit and vegetables. We need vitamin C to keep our teeth, gums and bones in good condition, as well as to help cuts and burns to heal.

35 *Vitamin D*

This vitamin is composed of a small number of fat-soluble substances (for sources see those listed under vitamin A). Our bodies obtain a large part of their vitamin D requirement from the sun's rays. If we were deprived of this vitamin we would suffer from Ricketts, a very common disease among children, which prevents the bones from hardening. Vitamin D contributes to the development of strong teeth and bones.

Vitamin E

This fat-soluble vitamin is found in: corn, oatmeal, milk, eggs, liver and a large number of vegetables. It used to be thought that vitamin E prevented sterility but this function has not been satisfactorily demonstrated.

Vitamin K

This is a fat-soluble substance present in vegetables such as: cauliflower, cabbage and tomatoes; it is also found in eggs. Our blood would not clot if we did not receive this vitamin.

One could also mention the remaining members of the vitamin B complex: pyridoxine, panthothenic and par-aminobenzoic acids, biotin (otherwise known as vitamin H), inositol, folic acid, choline, strepogenin, lyxoflavin and vitamin B12. This list might well be added to in the future. Finally, there is vitamin P whose existence is suspected but has not been proved.

Although, as their name suggests, vitamins are essential, a word of warning is necessary at this point. Our bodies require only very small amounts of these substances and we will obtain these if we eat a balanced diet which includes the foods mentioned earlier.

✧ Complete the following table using information from the text.

VITAMIN	CLASS	SOURCE	FUNCTION
C	Water-soluble	Liver, fruit and fresh vegetables	Prevents scurvy, keeps gums and teeth in good condition, helps heal cuts and burns.

