Vitamins & Cosmetics
A Historical Perspective

100 YEARS OF VITAMINS™

• The Polish-American biochemist Casimir Funk coined the term ‘vitamine’ for the very first time a century ago.
• Many developments had to take place for the link to be created between Funk’s discovery and today’s fundamental role of vitamins in the Personal Care market.
• 100 years later, we look back proudly on a century of remarkable discoveries in cosmetics and research to understand vitamins and their beauty benefits.
Vitamins & Cosmetics
A Historical Perspective

1900’s

Mineral oils replace vegetable oils in cosmetics. They offer greater whiteness, increased uniformity, prevention of rancidity.

Pond’s® Vanishing Cream, 1915

Formula 1. Modified cold cream from 1909

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredient</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White wax</td>
<td>1 oz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spermaceti</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lanolin</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocoanut oil</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almond oil</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tinct. benzoin</td>
<td>1</td>
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Pond’s® Cold Cream and Vanishing Cream, 1917

Cosmetics & Toiletries® magazine, May 1909
Vitamins & Cosmetics
A Historical Perspective

1911

Nivea® Creme - the first stable water-in-oil emulsion - is introduced. The emulsifying agent Eucerit® is made from lanolin, found in sheep’s wool, and is the key to Nivea® Creme’s unique properties.
The birth of “vitamines”

Polish biochemist Casimir Funk isolated a bioactive from rice bran which was given the name thiamine. Funk realized that it could cure patients of beriberi. Based on this finding, he published a landmark paper “the etiology of deficiency diseases”. He stated that all deficiency diseases can be prevented and cured by the addition of certain preventive substances for which he proposed the name “vitamines”. 
Early 1920’s

The 1920’s were the golden age for fragrance creation (Chanel No.5® in 1921, SHALIMAR® in 1925) and also the start of vitamin research in many universities and industrial laboratories such as Hoffmann-La Roche.
1930

Retinol, later to become “the” industry standard anti-aging ingredient is discovered.

Swiss chemist, Paul Karrer, was awarded a Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1931 for his work in synthesizing retinol.
Vitamins & Cosmetics
A Historical Perspective

1936

First vitamin’s industrial production.
1936 marks the start of the industrial synthesis and manufacture of individual vitamins. It was at today’s DSM’s site in Grenzach, Germany, that vitamin C has been first industrially produced. The revolutionary biochemical process proposed by the biochemist Tadeusz Reichstein to Roche is the base of the production technique still in use today.

1936 also marks the birth of “Ambre Solaire” from L’Oreal and of the “Pan-Cake” make-up from Max Factor.
Vitamins & Cosmetics
A Historical Perspective

**1938**

Vitamin E is produced industrially.

Otto Isler, who joins Roche in 1936, succeeds in 1938, together with P. Karrer (University of Zurich) and A.R Todd (University of Cambridge) in the industrial production of Vitamin E.
Pantene® is born. The Swiss scientist Dr. Gustav Erlemann discovers that panthenol works wonders on the hair - helping to repair damaged hair. Inspired by panthenol properties, Pantene® Hair tonic, created by Hoffman-LaRoche, makes its debut as a premium hair care line across Europe, replete with glass bottles and prestige scents.
In 1945 the first antioxidant theory of vitamin E activity is proposed by Danish biochemist Henrik Dam and his coworkers.

Decades later, in the 80-90’s, Roche’s research on skin also confirmed this theory for topically applied vitamin E. Vitamin E, soon becomes the “protective” vitamin in cosmetics. Its central role in Personal Care is that of a strong antioxidant, capturing free oxygen radicals generated by exposure to UV-light or pollution and preventing further damage. Generally, the addition of vitamin antioxidants (vitamin E and vitamin C) improves the photoprotection provided by sunscreens as a biological second line of defense against UV-induced premature skin aging.
1946

Vitamin A is produced industrially. Otto Isler undertakes the first large-scale industrial synthesis of vitamin A. This synthesis opens the way to a whole range of products: carotenoids as natural colorants, retinoids for skin treatments and later vitamin A derivatives for cosmetics.
Vitamins & Cosmetics
A Historical Perspective

1949

Biotin is produced industrially for the first time.

In 1942, two chemists from Roche, Sternbach and Goldberg begin to develop a synthesis for the industrial production of Biotin, their efforts are crowned by success in 1949.
1960’s

Pantene®, the leap to America.

Pantene® is the best seller hair spray in the world. Demand from European travelers in the United States drives American retailers to import Pantene® from Switzerland. The shopping in New York City gets even better when Pantene launches exclusively in upscale establishments like the Waldorf Astoria and Saks Fifth Avenue.
Historical Perspective

1973


The Dictionary was the first authoritative source for commonly accepted names of cosmetic ingredients. It was a response to consumer pressure in the late 1960s for information about the ingredients used to formulate cosmetic products.

Before 1973 everything was trade secret, the chemistry was not known, everything was sold by trade name.

Much more basic research suddenly started being done.
1975

Fair & Lovely®️, the world’s largest selling fairness cream is developed in India in 1975.

Some years later, the new fairness proposition is brought alive through multi-vitamins (A, B, C, E), each of which help in giving fairness + nourishment, resulting in the re-launched Fair & Lovely®️ Pink being henceforth known as Fair & Lovely multi-vitamin fairness cream.
Vitamins & Cosmetics
A Historical Perspective

1980’s

Vintage advert from Roche vitamins for Cosmetics.

They led the way in understanding the role of vitamins in cosmetics. Studies initiated on Panthenol, Vitamin A and Vitamin E have been highly recognized in the cosmetic industry.
Vitamins & Cosmetics
A Historical Perspective

1981

CILEXTREME RICIL’S™, the 1st mascara with vitamins by Gemey-Maybelline.
1983

Vitamin C is produced on a large scale.

It was at today’s DSM’s site in Dalry, Scotland, that vitamin C has been produced on a large scale in the new factory.
Vitamins & Cosmetics
A Historical Perspective

1990’s

Almay® ONE COAT from Revlon are formulated with vitamins A & E & Biotin.
Retinol (vitamin A) is the new anti-wrinkle ingredient.

RoC® launches the line “Retinol Actif Pur”. Retinol, vitamin A in its purest form, becomes the flagship ingredient of the brand and allowed them to be seen on the market as pioneer in treatment for visible reduction of wrinkles.

L’Oréal introduces under the Plénitude brand, Revitalift®, an anti-wrinkle, firming cream with Pro-Retinol A.

The same year Procter & Gamble launches under the Oil of Olaz® brand, Soin Anti-Rides et Fermérté, an anti-wrinkle firming cream with pro-retinol.
Vitamins & Cosmetics
A Historical Perspective

1997

Vintage company product catalogue
“The Beauty of vitamins” by Roche.
Specially designed to correct uneven skin tone and fine lines, Reti-C® combines two of the most effective anti-aging ingredients: pure Retinol and pure vitamin C. Retinol stimulates the renewal process of epidermal cells to minimise the appearance of wrinkles, and vitamin C is a natural exfoliator which leaves the skin glowing.
Vitamins & Cosmetics
A Historical Perspective

1999

RoC® RETINOL is upgraded to RETINOL A+C+E Triple Action.

Three essential vitamins for a combined action on wrinkles, tone and texture of skin:
- Retinol helps stimulate cell renewal to visibly reduce wrinkles.
- Pure vitamin C acts to even out the skin’s tone.
- Vitamin E, together with moisturising agents, acts on the skin’s hydration to soften and improve its texture.
Vitamins & Cosmetics
A Historical Perspective

2000

New to Oil of Olay’s Age Defying Series is Total Effects® Moisturizing Vitamin Complex.

The new product is formulated with an exclusive moisturizing combination of vitamins B3 and E, and pro-vitamin B5.
A Historical Perspective

2000’s

Antioxidants are back as antiagers and new publications are highlighting beauty benefits of niacinamide (vitamin B3) and vitamin C.

There is virtually no product category in which vitamins do not regularly appear as active ingredient.
Today

Vitamins are flagship products in the global cosmetic market.

- Recent studies suggest that close to 15% of all newly launched cosmetic products highlight vitamins on their packaging.
- Vitamin E is the most widely used cosmetic active ingredient in the world.
- Vitamins en Vogue in beauty magazines.