

Albert Niemann Encyclopedia Article

Albert Niemann

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1834-1921

German physician who was the first person to isolate cocaine. While a graduate student at the University of Göttingen in 1860, he was able to isolate a white, odorless, crystalline substance from the Peruvian coca leaf that he subsequently named "cocaine," short for cocaine hydrochloride. He explained the extraction of cocaine in his doctoral thesis; this was printed in the *American Journal of Pharmacy* in 1861. In 1914 Niemann described a form of xanthronatosis later called Niemann-Pick disease, a fatal infant disease characterized by mental and physical deterioration.