Wilhelm Petters Encyclopedia Article

Wilhelm Petters

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Contents

Wilhelm Petters Encyclopedia Article.....1

Contents.....2

Wilhelm Petters.....3

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1824-1889

Czech physician who first showed that the urine of diabetics contains large amounts of acetone. The level of acetone is important in determining the severity, and subsequent treatment, of the disease. In the diabetic patient, the lack of cellular glucose initiates a process in which fats and proteins are broken down and the byproducts burned for energy; this results in the production of acetone and a "sweetness of breath" that is often mistaken for alcohol.