



Dear twin,

Some of you may have attended our **Summer Twin party** in July 2009. The BBC filmed this event for a documentary on twins and the documentary in which the party will feature will be broadcast on consecutive days on 30 September and 01 October 2009 at 9.00pm.

The title of the documentary is "**The secret life of twins**" and it will be a two part documentary broadcast on two consecutive days. Please see below the outline of each of the programs. The party will be featured through the two programs helping to highlight different issues.

We hope you will enjoy watching this program as much as we enjoyed having you at our party

Once again the department would like to thank you for your continuous cooperation, and we hope that this program highlights the importance of the twin contribution to research.

With very best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim D Spector'.

Prof Tim D Spector

Department of Twin Research

The Secret Life of Twins (1/2)

BBC ONE, 9pm, Wednesday 30 September

Identical twins who have lived their lives apart. Twins with drastically different lifestyles who develop identical heart conditions at almost the same moment in their life-time. New two-part BBC One series, *The Secret Life of Twins*, meets some of the most fascinating identical twins in the world to find out what they have to tell us about the nature of us all.

The series starts with the heartbreaking story of Mia and Alexandra, identical twins adopted separately as babies but reunited by two pairs of devoted parents from the US and Norway. Though the girls have been raised in different cultures with contrasting approaches to child-rearing and childrens' education, their similarities present both sets of parents with the startling question of whether their differing parenting styles will ever have as much impact as their childrens' genes.

The experience of British twins, Paul and Iain, highlights a rare instance where genetic influences seem to have overridden lifestyle factors. Iain lives an active life in New Zealand, kayaking, walking, eating five fruit and veg a day and avoiding salt and caffeine. His brother Paul smokes, drinks and generally doesn't bother with a healthy diet. When Paul suffers a life threatening heart attack, Iain assumes that his lifestyle was to blame, and isn't surprised. But Iain seems to have missed out on the typical benefits of his healthy lifestyle when it's revealed that he isn't quite as healthy as he had always hoped.

With identical twin doctors Chris and Xand van Tulleken (*Medicine Men Go Wild*) as our guide, *Twins* goes one step further than the nature and nurture debate to explore a new branch of scientific research that suggests that our environment actually modifies our genes in a way that we are only just starting to understand.

Traversing the globe to meet compelling twins and scientists with trail-blazing ideas, this pioneering series investigates whether twins may hold the key to understanding what makes us all who we are.

The Secret Life of Twins (2/2)

BBC ONE, 9pm, Thursday 1 October

The second episode of this compelling science series explores the unusual differences that set some identical twins apart. Two mass twin gatherings at St Thomas' Hospital in London and Twinsburg in Ohio provide Chris and Xand van Tulleken with a unique opportunity to meet hundreds of pairs of identical and non identical twins, and to find out how different they really are.

Though they are born with the same genetic package, some identical twins have startling differences that present scientists with challenging questions about how we become who we are meant to be.

Twins travels to the US to meet Mark and John. Mark is straight, married and father of two children. His identical brother, John, came out aged 26. Confronted with the difficult emotional task of coming out in a small, conservative town in Kansas, John truly believes that it is his nature (his genes) that determined his sexual orientation. But, if so, why has his identical twin brother not chosen a similar path?

Three sets of identical twins offer other surprising differences. Aged just two leukaemia strikes Olivia but not her healthy sister Isabella, raising the question of why the life threatening disease was triggered in just one twin. Having lived a stressful adult life, Susan shows signs of more rapid ageing than her sister, Shelagh; whilst Norwegian twin Noora weighs almost 20kg more than her sister Miia.

Could epigenetics, the study of how environment may modify our genes, hold the key to understanding why some chance life events might switch on or off the genetic predispositions that we are dealt with at birth?