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# NEWSLETTER

## GEMINI IN 2017



### Welcome to the 10<sup>th</sup> Gemini newsletter

The end of 2017 marks an important landmark – all of the twins have now turned 10 years old, and Gemini has been running for a decade! It has been an extraordinary journey, and we have felt so privileged to have had the opportunity to study the twins' development for 10 years.

### Gemini in the press

Gemini has continued to go from strength to strength in 2017. We have published findings in scientific journals, spoken at international conferences and won awards. In June, the **New Scientist's** cover story reported Gemini's most important findings – that babies' genes cause them to be born with very different appetites, and a baby's appetite is responsible for how fast they grow from birth to toddlerhood: (link to online article: [bit.ly/2rTAPoS](http://bit.ly/2rTAPoS)). Gemini will also be featured by **Jamie Oliver** on TV in December (see page 3!).

### Gemini research

In 2017 we published the very first studies into the origins of emotional eating in childhood (you can read about these on page 3). We also explored the importance of nature (environment) and nurture (genes) in the timing of your twins' important developmental milestones – sitting, crawling and taking their first steps. We found that the age at which they were able to sit unsupported and crawl was influenced equally by their genes and their early home environment (e.g. being encouraged and helped), but the age at which they started walking was mostly determined by their genes – they would have done this anyway, whatever you did to help! You can read more about our new research plans on pages 2 and 3.

### What's new?

We are excited to launch our brand new logo (we hope you like it!), and a new height chart, which you will find included with this Newsletter (you can read more about this on page 4). We also have a new Twitter account so that you can follow Gemini's news as it happens: @GeminiResearch. Please do follow us if you haven't already! We are in the process of giving the website a facelift and will let you know once it's complete. The new 10-years questionnaire will be available on here next year.

### What next?

Dr Clare Llewellyn, the Gemini Director, has been awarded a prestigious research fellowship by MQ, the UK's largest mental health research charity. She will continue to study the twins' eating behaviour as they move into adolescence, a very important time when lots of changes happen. Clare hopes to explore how eating changes during the teenage years, and why. We'll be sending out a new 10-year questionnaire next year, and are excited to hear from the twins themselves for the very first time (as well as from the parents too!). We hope the twins will enjoy giving us their views.

## NEW MEMBER OF GEMINI

Hello! My name is Alice Kininmonth and I joined Gemini in October after completing an MSc in Psychological Approaches to Health at Leeds University. I'm fascinated by how our behaviour influences our health, and, in particular, our relationship with food. Why do we differ so much in *how much* and *what* we like to eat, and how does this influence our growth and development during childhood?

### What will your research focus on?

You may remember taking part in a telephone interview with Gemini when your twins were four years old. My PhD research will use the information you gave us to find out how the early home environment (e.g. meal times, food availability, screen time) influences eating behaviours, growth and development during the primary school years. The information you provide in the next questionnaires will help me complete my research.

### Why is this important?

Even though most people assume that the early home environment plays a key role in shaping a child's lifelong eating and activity habits, we don't know if this is actually true. This is because few studies have measured the home food and activity environment properly, and linked it with later growth and development. Thanks to each and every one of you, we can look at this in Gemini. I am so honoured to be joining the Gemini team and to have the opportunity to work on this important research!



## MEET GEMINI'S FIRST INTERN



*Lewis Cox (left) is a Health Psychology MSc student working on Gemini (and he is a twin too!) On the right is his identical twin brother Elliott.*

### How did you get involved with Gemini?

Hello, my name is Lewis Cox, and I have been helping with Gemini this summer. Earlier this year I had an interview for the MSc in Health Psychology with Dr Clare Llewellyn and contacted her after my application was successful to see how I could get involved. I also won the Jane Wardle studentship which was set up after Professor Jane Wardle, founder of the Gemini study, sadly passed away two years ago. In the summer, I spoke to many of you to confirm that we had the correct contact details for you, and thank you for taking part. It was great to hear how interested everyone was in the Gemini research!

### What will your research focus on?

For my MSc research, I will be looking at how different aspects of infant appetite relate to rapid weight gain from birth to toddlerhood. I hope to develop a screening tool that will be able to identify the babies at risk of rapid weight gain, from a simple questionnaire about their appetite.

### Why is this important?

We know that very rapid weight gain in infancy puts babies at risk of overweight as children and adults. But we don't know much about what causes it, or how to identify babies at high risk. If we can develop a simple questionnaire that can identify which babies are going to have rapid weight gain, then at-risk babies and their families could be given extra help and attention to ensure they stay at a healthy weight. I've really enjoyed my time working with the Gemini team and I'm hoping to do a PhD at UCL after my MSc.

# EMOTIONAL EATING IN CHILDHOOD

For my PhD I've been studying the origins of emotional eating in childhood, using Gemini. Emotional eating is something that most of us are all too familiar with; after a stressful or upsetting day many people indulge in their favourite foods (such as chocolate, ice cream or crisps) for comfort. In contrast, other people lose their appetite altogether and can't eat anything at all when stressed. Even though these behaviours are well recognised by most people, we don't know much about how they develop in childhood.

Thanks to the brilliant information provided by the Gemini families, I was able to study, for the very first time, how emotional eating develops. I found that in contrast to other childhood eating behaviours such as food fussiness, emotional eating is not influenced by genes. In fact, it is family environmental influences that seem to shape emotional eating in childhood. These findings are important because they highlight that parents can shape their children's eating behaviours, and help them develop a healthy relationship with food. You can read our short online article about emotional eating here: [bit.ly/2BNNWds](http://bit.ly/2BNNWds)

I've now got my PhD! The last three years as a PhD researcher on Gemini have been a fantastic experience and none of this important work would have been possible without the dedication of all Gemini families. Thank you!



*Moritz Herle just completed his PhD on emotional eating in Gemini*



Gemini research has continued to attract lots of media attention in 2017. Our studies have received coverage in the New Scientist, the Conversation, the Guardian and the Independent among others.

We also launched the **@GeminiResearch** twitter account in May and are very excited to have another way to share our work with the Gemini families and the wider world.



## GEMINI ON TV!

Back in the summer, Gemini team member Dr Alison Fildes met with Jamie Oliver and Jimmy Doherty to talk about baby food and how to help children like vegetables. Watch out for this episode of 'Jamie and Jimmy's Friday Night Feast', which will be shown on **Friday 29th December at 8pm on Channel 4.**



*Dr Alison Fildes talking about Gemini research with Jamie Oliver and Jimmie Doherty*



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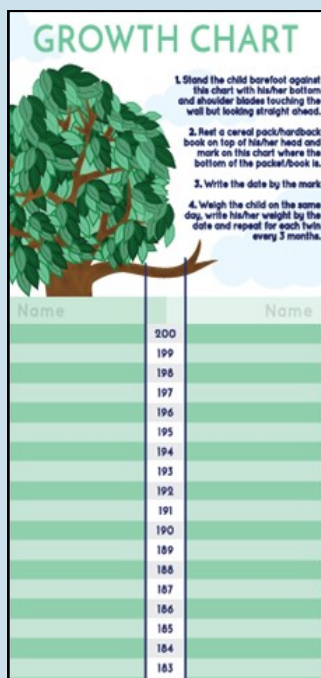




*The Gemini Team (from left to right): Dr Clare Llewellyn, Dr Alison Fildes, Dr Moritz Herle, Andrea Smith*



*Some of the Gemini twins in 2017*



## LAUNCHING OUR NEW HEIGHT CHARTS

We have designed a **new height measure** for the twins which can be used for the next few years. You will find this included in the envelope for this newsletter, along with instructions for how to put it on the wall. Measuring the twins' heights and weights is an extremely important part of the study; it will allow us to explore growth patterns, and see how the information we collected between birth and 10 years relates to their on-going growth and development.

If you have found it hard to submit heights and weights every three months, providing any measurements at all is still very helpful for our study. please do keep sending in any measurements that you can. You can use our online form to submit measurements: [www.geministudy.co.uk/gemweight](http://www.geministudy.co.uk/gemweight) or email them to us at: [gemini@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:gemini@ucl.ac.uk).

Thank you all for your continued support and for providing us with regular measurements. Thank you!

