Why Children Look Like Their Parents

KS3 Ages 11-14 ⏰ 3 min read

What Makes You Look Like Your Parents?

Have you ever noticed that you might have your mum's eyes or your dad's hair? This isn't a coincidence—it's **heredity**, which means traits get passed down from parents to children. But how exactly does this happen?

The answer lies in something incredibly tiny called **DNA**. Think of **DNA** as an instruction manual made of chemicals that lives inside almost every cell in your body. This manual contains thousands of instructions called **genes** that tell your body how to build itself—what colour your eyes should be, how tall you might grow, and even the shape of your nose.

Think of it like a recipe book. Your parents each pass you some of their recipes (genes), and your body follows them to become you.

How Do You Get Your Parents' Genes?

Every cell in your body has **23 pairs of chromosomes**—these are like packages that hold your genes. You get **23 chromosomes from your mum** and **23 from your dad**, which gives you **46 total**. This is why you're a mix of both parents rather than being identical to either one.

Some **traits are dominant**, meaning they show up more easily. For example, if you inherit a gene for brown eyes from one parent and blue eyes from another, the brown eye gene usually wins because it's dominant. Other **traits are recessive**, which means they only appear if you inherit them from both parents.

Think of it like choosing toppings for a pizza. You might pick pepperoni from one menu and mushrooms from another, creating your own unique pizza.

Why Aren't You Identical to Your Parents?

Even though you inherit genes from both parents, you're not an exact copy of either one. This is because you receive a random mix of genes from each parent. Your

brother or sister gets a different random mix, which is why siblings can look quite different from each other.

Additionally, the **environment** affects how genes are expressed. Sun exposure, diet, exercise, and even stress can influence how you look and develop. This is why identical twins—who share the same **DNA**—can develop slightly different appearances as they grow up.

So the next time someone says you have your parent's smile, remember: you're carrying their genetic instructions, combined uniquely with your other parent's, to create someone entirely original—you!