



Predicting who you might find appealing

Video transcript: Clip from *Countdown to Life: The Extraordinary Making of You* (BBC Two, 2015).

MICHAEL MOSLEY:

In 1994 a group of Swiss researchers did a rather unusual experiment.

They asked a group of blokes, 44 of them, to wear some T-shirts and to wear them for 2 days without washing or using deodorant.

Then they got some lucky girls in, and they had to sniff those T-shirts. And they had to judge them from one to 10 on sexiness.

Now, strangely enough, when they crunched the data afterwards, they discovered that the T-shirts which had been rated sexiest by the women were those that had been worn by blokes who had very different immune systems to their own. And that suggests that the women were somehow unconsciously picking this up through smell.

Now this is probably overdoing it, but this study certainly suggests that the form your immune system took in the womb might have had some influence on who you find attractive later in life.

So parents may be unwittingly creating children that are more resistant to infection by choosing a partner with an HLA system very different to their own.