



Who wants to live forever?

Biologists have created a baker's yeast that lives to the age of 800 in yeast years. The discovery, made through changes in diet and genetics, brings science closer to controlling the unit of all life: the cell. "We're setting the foundation for reprogramming healthy life," said one scientist.

The research group put baker's yeast on a calorie-restricted diet. "We got a 10-fold life extension ... the longest one that has ever been achieved in any organism," said the scientist. Normal yeast cells live for about a week.

Baker's yeast has led to the discovery of some of the most important genes that control aging and disease. One study reported that a mouse with a change in one gene lived 30 percent longer than normal.

Finding drugs to extend the human life span without side effects will not be easy, said one scientist. "Maybe it will do nothing, but having nothing else, I think it's certainly a good thing to try," said the scientist.

In the study, scientists made a link between genes that control life span for animals and those that are 'turned on' by calorie restriction. Calorie restriction, a form of starvation, has been shown to reduce disease and extend life in many animals. Scientists believe that a nutrient shortage kicks cells into a 'fixing' mode, enabling them to re-direct energy from growth into anti-aging systems until the time they can feed again.

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Will we one day have a drug that can reverse aging?

