

Low-calorie diet: Longer life?

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St. Louis scientists are starting a 2-year study to confirm a short Louisiana State University trial suggesting low-calorie diets result in longer life.

Scientists at the St. Louis-based Washington University School of Medicine more than a decade ago demonstrated caloric restriction increased the lifespan in mice and rats by about 30 percent by changing some of the markers associated with aging, such as DNA damage.

Now Dr. John Holloszy, a Washington University professor of medicine, and Dr. Luigi Fontana, an assistant professor of medicine, are launching the study.

"We know people on calorie restriction will lose weight," said Fontana. "But this study isn't a weight-loss study. We're hoping to learn more about whether calorie restriction can alter the aging process."

Holloszy added, "If we can demonstrate (calorie restriction) changes these markers of aging ... we'll have a pretty good idea that it's somehow influencing the aging process at the cellular level."

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