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## FINDINGS

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### A New Caution For Teens on Weight

Women who are overweight at age 18 have a higher risk of dying young, researchers reported yesterday.

A study of 102,400 female nurses showed that women who were overweight or obese at 18 drank more alcohol, smoked more and were less likely to exercise as teenagers -- and were also more likely to die between the ages of 36 and 56.

The more a woman weighed at 18, the greater her risk of dying young, the researchers reported in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*. Women who were moderately overweight at 18 were more than 50 percent more likely to die in the 12 years of follow-up as the slimmest 18-year-olds, and obese women were more than twice as likely.

The women died of various causes -- 258 died of cancer, 55 died of heart disease or stroke, and 61 committed suicide.

"This paper underscores the importance of efforts to prevent excessive weight gain in children, not only to prevent obesity but also to prevent moderate overweight," said co-author Frank Hu of the Harvard School of Public Health.

### Radio Tags Promising As Surgery Precaution

Technology that helps airlines keep track of baggage and sounds an alarm when a shoplifter tries to leave a store may be able to stop surgeons from losing a sponge inside a patient, a study said.

Doctors at Stanford University School of Medicine who tested sponges embedded with radio-frequency identification tags said the system alerted surgeons when they deliberately left a sponge inside a temporarily closed surgical site and waved a detector wand over it.

But they said the chips are too large, at 0.8 inches wide, and will need to be reduced to be practical on sponges and surgical instruments.

Alex Macario, a physician and professor of anesthesia who led the study, said the future will probably see a combination of tags and other techniques, such as counting instruments and sponges before and after an operation.

The Stanford study, published in this week's *Archives of Surgery*, involved eight patients.

### Global Warming Threatens Mangroves

Global warming could lead to the destruction of more than half the mangrove wetlands of some Pacific islands, wiping out or reducing marine breeding grounds that support multimillion-dollar fisheries, a U.N. report said yesterday.

A U.N. Environment Program report looking at the impact of rising seas on mangroves in 16 Pacific nations

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found that the hardest-hit island nations would be American Samoa, Fiji, Tuvalu and the Federated States of Micronesia. Those countries could lose more than half their mangroves by the end of the century, it said.

"The true economic value of ecosystems like mangroves is now starting to emerge," said report coordinator Kitty Simonds. "Mangroves are important nurseries for fish, act to filter coastal pollution, and are important sources of timber and construction materials for local communities."

Mangroves also protect islands from flooding, with mangroves estimated to reduce wave energy by 75 percent. They proved crucial in limiting damage to some sections of coast during the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.

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