

Documenting and Coding Tips: Obesity

Medicare Advantage

For the general population, an increased body mass index (BMI) correlates well with excess body fat. CMS will cover up to 22 behavioral counseling visits per year from a qualified primary care physician or other primary care provider in a primary setting for obesity, defined as patients with a BMI of ≥ 30 kg/m, G0447 (Face-to-Face Behavioral Counseling for Obesity, 15 minutes), if the patient meets all requirements.¹ All intensive behavioral therapies should be consistent with the five “A”s: assess, advise, agree, assist and arrange. Morbid (severe) obesity, morbid obesity with alveolar hypoventilation and a BMI of ≥ 40.00 are associated to HCC 22.

Facts about protein-calorie malnutrition and obesity

The BMI should be coded secondary to the underlying condition (overweight, obesity, morbid obesity or protein-calorie malnutrition).

Classification	BMI Principal cut-off points
Underweight	<18.50
Severe malnutrition	<16.00
Moderate malnutrition	16.00–16.99
Mild malnutrition	17.00–18.49
Normal range	18.50–24.99
Overweight	>25.00
Pre-obese	25.00–29.99
Obese	>30.00
Obese class I	30.00–34.99
Obese class II	35.00–39.99
Obese class III (morbid obesity)	≥ 40.00

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), a BMI between 18.50 and 24.99 is considered within the normal range for many individuals, although the cut-off points are lower for many Asian populations.²

Per the ICD-10-CM Official Guidelines for Coding and Reporting FY 2021: “A dash (-) at the end of an alphabetic index entry indicates that additional characters are required. Even if a dash is not included at the alphabetic index entry, it is necessary to refer to the tabular list to verify that no 7th character is required.” The bolding of the ICD-10-CM codes represents categories, subcategories or codes that map to the CMS-HCC risk adjustment model for payment year 2021.

Please check with your health plan regarding contract specifics as coverage may vary. Optum360 ICD-10-CM: Professional for Physicians 2021. Salt Lake City, UT: 2020. 2021 HCPCS Level II Professional. Salt Lake City, UT: Optum360; 2020.

1. CMS Manual System: Pub 100-03 Medicare National Coverage Determinations (Transmittal 142). CMS.gov Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Guidance/Transmittals/Downloads/R142NCD.pdf. Published February 3, 2012. Accessed November 3, 2020.
2. WHO expert consultation. Appropriate body-mass index for Asian populations and its implications for policy and intervention strategies. The Lancet. sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0140673603152683. Published January 9, 2004. Accessed November 3, 2020.
3. Pi-Sunyer, F, D Becker, et al. United States. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institutes. Clinical Guidelines on the Identification, Evaluation, and Treatment of Overweight and Obesity in Adults: The Evidence Report. Bethesda: National Institutes of Health, 1998. nhlbi.nih.gov/files/docs/guidelines/ob_gdlns.pdf. Accessed November 3, 2020.
4. Buchwald H. Consensus Conference Statement Bariatric surgery for morbid obesity: Health implications for patients, health professionals, and third-party payers. asbms.org/resources/consensus-statement. Published March 2005. Accessed November 3, 2020.

ICD-10-CM codes	Code description
E66.01	Morbid (severe) obesity due to excess calories
E66.09	Other obesity due to excess calories
E66.1	Drug-induced obesity. Use additional code for adverse effect, if applicable, to identify drug (T36-T50 with fifth or sixth character 5)
E66.2	Morbid (severe) obesity with alveolar hypoventilation
E66.3	Overweight
E66.8	Other obesity
E66.9	Obesity, unspecified

BMI (adult 20 years of age or older)³

- Z68.1 BMI 19.9 or less, adult (underweight or malnutrition)
- Z68.20–Z68.24 BMI 20.0–24.9 (normal)
- Z68.25–Z68.29 BMI 25.0–29.9 (overweight)
- Z68.30–Z68.39 BMI 30.0–39.9 (obese)

*Note: Report a code from Z68.35–Z68.39 with **E66.01**, Morbid (severe) obesity due to excess calories, if BMI ≥ 35 –39.9 with a related comorbidity (for example, DM, HTN, COPD, etc.) with supportive documentation of the comorbid conditions.⁴*

- **Z68.41** Body mass index [BMI] 40.0–44.9, adult
- **Z68.42** Body mass index [BMI] 45.0–49.9, adult
- **Z68.43** Body mass index [BMI] 50–59.9, adult
- **Z68.44** Body mass index [BMI] 60.0–69.9, adult
- **Z68.45** Body mass index [BMI] 70 or greater, adult