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Morbid Obesity

DOCUMENTATION AND CODING

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) recognizes that patients with clinically severe obesity are at high risk for obesity-associated morbidity and mortality.¹ With obesity on the rise, it's crucial that doctors recognize the negative effect that obesity and accompanying complications can have on their patients' health.

Include in medical record

Body mass index (BMI) is used as a screening tool for patients who are overweight or obese, there is no coding rule that defines what BMI values correspond to obesity or morbid obesity. The provider must also document the diagnosis **and** the care plan. Examples of a care plan include counseling for diet and exercise and referral to a dietitian or bariatric surgeon.

Coding information

Any patient with a BMI greater than 40 should be evaluated for severe obesity with the appropriate diagnosis code assigned.

- Example for a patient with documented severe obesity, BMI 42, and lifestyle modification counseling would be coded as E66.01 and Z68.41.
- It is important to evaluate and code for severe obesity in patients with comorbidities, even if the BMI is below 40. Examples of these comorbidities include heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, or high cholesterol.

Coding Obesity:

ICD-10-CM code ²	Description
E66.01	Morbid (severe) obesity due to excess calories.
E66.09	Other obesity due to excess calories.
E66.2	Morbid (severe) obesity with alveolar hypoventilation.*
E66.8	Other obesity.
E66.813	Obesity, class 3.

*E66.2 cannot be coded with E66.01. If the patient has both conditions, only use E66.2

Coding BMI:

ICD-10-CM code	Description
Z68.41	BMI value 40.0-44.9
Z68.42	BMI value 45.0-49.9
Z68.43	BMI value 50.0-59.9
Z68.44	BMI value 60.0-69.9
Z68.45	BMI value 70.0 or greater

Tips for success

It is important to note that BMI is a secondary code assignment. Therefore, to clarify the clinical significance of the BMI value, a primary diagnosis of overweight, obesity or morbid obesity must be in the documentation to allow for submission of the corresponding ICD-10-CM BMI code (Z code).

- Documentation of appearance does not satisfy diagnosis.
- A coder can only code what is documented in the medical record, a diagnosis of morbid (severe) obesity must be documented by the provider.
- The BMI value with or without complications alone cannot determine the specificity and ICD-10 code selection.
- It's crucial to document morbid (severe) obesity, even after a patient has had weight loss surgery, if a patient still meets the diagnostic criteria.

¹ National Institutes of Health (NIH) Overweight and Obesity Statistics (2021). [Overweight & Obesity Statistics - NIDDK](#).

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