How and Why to Code for Obesity: A Guide for HCPs on Coding for Obesity-Related Conditions in Clinical Practice

Obesity is a rapidly growing global public health concern, reaching epidemic levels in many countries.[1]

OBESITY

CHALLENGES
Long-held misconceptions hinder appropriate support and care[2-4]

ACCESS TO CARE
Diagnostic coding and medical billing complexities may block access to obesity care[3,5]

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE
New advancements in obesity care offer a chance to enhance its visibility[3,6]

Obesity Medical Coding Essentials[7-9]

1. ICD-10 Diagnostic Code
2. BMI Code Z68.XX
3. Additional Z Codes (eg, for SDOH, Screening or Counseling)
4. CPT Code for Visit/Counseling

Diagnosis of obesity may help patients achieve greater weight loss and meet other favorable clinical outcomes.[10,11]

- Emphasize diagnosis and complications over BMI alone when selecting codes[12]
- Include a Z code for BMI (Z68.XX)[7,12]
- Consider including additional Z codes for counseling as appropriate (eg, Z71.3, Z71.89)[7,12]

Common ICD-10-CM and BMI Codes Across the BMI Spectrum[12-15]

BMI	<18.5	18.5-24.9	25-29.9	30-34.9	35-39.9	≥40
Range	Underweight	Normal	Overweight	Obesity Class I	Obesity Class II	Obesity Class III
ICD-10-CM Code	R63.6	N/A	E66.3	E66.811	E66.812	E66.813
BMI Code	Z68.1	Z68.1-Z68.24	Z68.25-Z68.29	Z68.30-Z68.34	Z68.35-Z68.39	Z68.41-Z68.45

When Coding for Obesity, Include the ICD-10 Diagnostic Code for Obesity and the Z Code for BMI[7,12]

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Common ICD-10-CM Codes for Obesity[12,13,15-17]

E66.89	Other obesity not elsewhere classified
E66.9*	Obesity, unspecified
E66.1	Drug-induced obesity
E66.2	Severe obesity with alveolar hypoventilation
E66.09	Other obesity due to excess calories†

Common CPT Codes for Obesity Screening & Counseling[9,18,19]

CPT 99401	Preventive medicine counseling and/or risk factor interventions provided to an individual; ~15 minutes
CPT 99402	Preventive medicine counseling and/or risk factor interventions provided to an individual; ~30 minutes
CPT 99403	Preventive medicine counseling and/or risk factor interventions provided to an individual; ~45 minutes
G0447	Face-to-face behavioral counseling for obesity; 15 minutes
G0473	Face-to-face behavioral counseling for obesity, group (2–10); 30 minutes

Relevant CPT Codes for Body Composition Analysis[20,21]

CPT 0358T	Bioelectrical impedance analysis whole body composition assessment, with interpretation and report
CPT 76499	Unlisted diagnostic radiographic procedure
Modifier 25	Significant, separately identifiable evaluation-and-management service (eg, body composition analysis) provided on same day of service

Accurate Coding Aids in Defining and Documenting Treatment More Effectively[12,22,23]

- Report clinically significant obesity diagnoses
- Include codes for complications, as appropriate
- Z codes (eg, BMI) must be accompanied by an ICD-10 diagnostic code for obesity
- Consider patient impact: Phrases like "morbid obesity" and "due to excess calories" may reinforce stigma
- Do not report a diagnosis of overweight without additional information on existing obesity-related complications and comorbidities
- Document comorbidities
- Avoid BMI codes in pregnancy



Accurate coding for obesity and related conditions is vital for treatment efficacy, patient care, and overcoming "care access" hurdles. It is important to document diagnoses and comorbidities correctly and adhere to coding standards to improve healthcare services.[22]

*E66.0 is a nonbillable code. Better to code one of the listed subcategory codes ("child code"). Unless drug-induced obesity, preferred codes might include E66.811, E66.812, E66.813, or E66.89 if the cause is known, or E66.9 if the cause is unclear.
†The phrase "due to excess calories" may be stigmatizing to patients; consider the impact if choosing this code.
BMI=body mass index; CPT=Current Procedural Terminology; HCP=healthcare professional; ICD-10=International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision; ICD-10-CM=ICD-10-Clinical Modification; N/A=not applicable; SDOH=social determinants of health.

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