

Risk Adjustment Coding Academy- Coding Focus

Morbid Obesity



Obesity is a condition that occurs when a person has excessive adipose (fatty) tissue, making them significantly above their ideal weight. According to the Centers for Disease Control, more than one-third of adults in the United States are obese¹. Among those, over 15 million are reported as being morbidly obese².

Body Mass Index

Obesity is measured based on a person's body mass index or BMI. BMI calculates a person's body fat based on their weight in relation to their height. Individuals with a BMI higher than 25 are considered to be overweight and those who have a BMI of 30 or greater are considered to be obese.

Morbid obesity is defined as someone who is 100 pounds over their ideal weight, has a BMI of 40 or higher, or has a BMI of 35 or more and is experiencing obesity-related health conditions, such as diabetes or high blood pressure³.

Causes of Obesity

There are multiple factors that can lead to obesity. Most people believe that it's simply the result of eating too much and exercising too little, but that is not always the case. Behaviors, such as poor dietary habits and a lack of physical

activity can certainly lead to obesity, but there are other factors to consider as well. Medications like corticosteroids, antidepressants and anticonvulsants can contribute to obesity, as well as certain medical conditions like hypothyroidism, Cushing's disease and polycystic ovarian syndrome. Genetics and family history as well as environmental concerns, such as limited access to healthy food sources and exercise facilities, can all be contributing factors to obesity.

Complications and Risks

Obesity greatly increases a person's risk for multiple serious health conditions, such as:

- Type 2 Diabetes
- Coronary heart disease
- Stroke
- Hypertension
- Osteoarthritis
- Sleep apnea and respiratory problems
- Gallbladder disease
- Dyslipidemia
- Certain cancers (endometrial, breast, liver, kidney)⁴

Additionally, obesity can interfere with hormone levels, leading to infertility, depression and anxiety.

Morbid obesity can be treated in a number of ways. Lifestyle changes include incorporating a healthy diet and becoming more physically active. Doctors may prescribe different medications to promote weight loss, and in some extreme cases, bariatric surgery such as gastric bypass may be recommended.

Coding Guidance

ICD-10-CM Coding Guidelines, Section I.B.14 states "The BMI codes should only be reported as secondary diagnoses."⁵ Additionally, the patient's BMI must be clearly documented as coders are not allowed to calculate BMI. In order to code a patient as morbidly obese, the provider must expressly document it in the medical record. If there is a major conflict between the reported BMI and the diagnosis of morbid obesity, the provider should be queried for clarification.

Morbid Obesity (HCC 22)

E66.01 – Morbid (severe) obesity due to excess calories

E66.2 – Morbid (severe) obesity w/ alveolar hypoventilation

Z68.41 – BMI 40.0-44.9, adult

Z68.42 – BMI 45.0-49.9, adult

Z68.43 – BMI 50.0-59.9, adult

Z68.44 – BMI 60.0-69.9, adult

Z68.45 – BMI 70 or greater, adult

Resources:

- ¹ Centers for Disease Control (n.d.) Data and Statistics. Retrieved January 6, 2017 from cdc.org
- ² Obes, J (2013) Morbid Obesity Rates Continue to Rise Rapidly in the United States. Retrieved January 6, 2017 from nih.gov
- ³ Bariatric Surgery Center (n.d.) What is Morbid Obesity? Retrieved January 6, 2017 from urmc.rochester.edu
- ⁴ Centers for Disease Control (n.d.) Adult Obesity Causes & Consequences. Retrieved January 6, 2017 from cdc.gov
- ⁵ Schmidt, A., Kenney, A., Krawzik, K., & Willard, P. (2016). ICD-10-CM expert for physicians 2017: The complete official code set. Place of publication not identified: Optum360°