PREMERA | BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF ALASKA

Class III Obesity

OVERVIEW

Class III obesity (also known as morbid obesity) is a serious condition associated with shorter life expectancy and serious health consequences in the form of co-morbid conditions such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, and obstructive sleep apnea.

Providers can be reluctant to document obesity as "morbid" or "severe" for fear of offending patients. The term "morbid obesity" has largely been replaced by "class III obesity" to reduce stigma and promote a more respectful provider-patient relationship. Patients, however, still need to understand that obesity is a serious condition that can affect their overall health. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines adult overweight and obesity as:

- Class III Obesity (Severe Obesity): Body Mass Index (BMI) ≥ 40 Kg/m2
- Obesity: BMI 30Kg/m2or greater
  - Class I Obesity: 30 Kg/m2 to less than 35
  - Class II Obesity: 35 to less than 40 Kg/M2
- Overweight: 25 to less than 30 Kg/m2

DOCUMENTATION

When appropriate, documentation of descriptors such as "class III" is essential for selecting the diagnosis code that accurately represents the patient's condition. For example, when a provider documents "overweight" or "obese/obesity," but a patient has a BMI of 40 or above (indicating class III obesity), the provider/coder must defer to the documented verbiage and not to the BMI value when assigning a code for the associated clinically significant condition. In this case, the coder must select the diagnosis code for "overweight" or "obese/obesity". However, the diagnosis code for a BMI of 40 or above should still be reported even if inconsistent with a documented diagnosis of "overweight" or "obese/obesity". The example below illustrates this concept:

Documentation example	Incomplete code assignment	Correct code assignment
Vitals: BMI 41.2 Assessment & Plan: Obesity – adopt low calorie and diet and initiate vigorous exercise regime	E66.9: Obesity, unspecified	E66.9: Obesity, unspecified Z68.41: Body mass index [BMI] 40.0-44.9 While these diagnoses are inconsistent with one another, the provider has addressed the obesity; this provides the support necessary to report the BMI code.

When reviewing class III obesity with your patient, be sure to document the following:

- The diagnosis of class III obesity
- Evaluation and/or treatment plan, such as weight loss, diet, exercise, and/or referral to a nutritionist
- BMI may be automatically calculated and documented by the electronic medical record or by a healthcare professional other than a physician, such as a dietitian

CODING

When coding class III obesity:

- First assign an ICD-10 code for class III obesity:
  - E66.813, obesity, class III
- Then choose an appropriate code for patient's BMI:
  - Z68.41 – Z68.45, Body Mass Index (BMI) 40 or greater, adult

- Code co-morbid conditions (e.g., hypertension or diabetes) if the provider addressed them during the face-to-face visit and documented them in the patient's medical record

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- You can find an online BMI calculator at: www.cdc.gov/bmi/adult-calculator/index.html
- For more information about documentation and coding of this and any other chronic or complex condition, email ProviderClinicalConsulting@Premera.com

Note: Tip sheets are regularly reviewed and revised with pertinent technical specification updates from ICD-10-CM.