

Obesity & BMI Coding Tips



BMI can be misleading without an associated diagnosis because the calculation does not account for muscle mass, bone density, body composition, or ethnic or gender differences¹.

Adult BMI Weight Status

Adult BMI (Age 20+)	
BMI < 19.9	Underweight
BMI 20 - 24.9	Healthy Weight
BMI 25 - 29.9	Overweight
BMI 30 - 34.9	Obese
BMI 35 - 39.9 (With 1+ Co-Morbidities)	40 Morbidly Obese
BMI ≥ 40	

Calculating Pediatric BMI (Age 2 - 19)

Birth to 38 Months
 LENGTH + WEIGHT FOR AGE
 HEAD CIRCUMFERENCE-FOR-AGE +
 WEIGHT FOR LENGTH

2 to 20 years
 STATURE-FOR-AGE + WEIGHT-
 FOR-LENGTH
 BMI-FOR-AGE **OR**

2 to 5 years
 WEIGHT-FOR-STATURE

Percentile	ICD-10
< 5.0	Z68.51
5.0 - 84.99	Z38.52
85.0 - 94.99 - 84.99	Z68.53
≥ 95.0	Z68.54

ICD-10 Official Guidelines ²	Document	Remember
<p>BMI may be documented by any clinician.</p> <p>The treating provider must be the one to document obesity, morbid obesity, or any other diagnosis-related code from a BMI measurement.</p> <p>BMI codes should only be reported as a secondary diagnosis code.</p> <p>BMI has no risk value without an associated diagnosis, such as obesity.³</p> <p>Coders and billers cannot infer obesity from a BMI value.</p>	<p>Documentation must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Date of exam • Weight • BMI <p>Documentation should include specific details of the cause and extent of obesity like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to excess calories • Endocrine related • Morbid/Severe 	<p>State the clinical significance of obesity on the patient's health.</p> <p>Possible complications and co-morbidities include⁴:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diabetes • Disorder of lipid proteins • Heart disease • Respiratory problems • Osteoarthritis <p>Individuals who are overweight, obese or morbidly obese are at an increased risk for certain medical conditions when compared to persons of normal weight. Therefore, these conditions are always clinically significant and reportable when documented by the provider⁵.</p>

For additional resources, contact our Provider Relations team at Providers@ARHealthWellness.com

References and Notes

¹ <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/overweight-and-obesity>

² <https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Coding/ICD10/Downloads/2019-ICD10-Coding-Guidelines-.pdf>

³ Report on Medicare Compliance, Volume 26 Number 14 pg. 2. April 24, 2017

⁴ <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/overweight-and-obesity>

⁵ AHA Coding Clinic, 3rd quarter 2011, Vol. 28, Num. 3, pages 4-5

This educational material complies with accepted 2018 ICD-10-CM practices and guidelines and is for general supplemental purposes only. The information is not guaranteed to be complete, free of errors, or the most current revision. It is the responsibility of the provider to document accurate and complete codes, clinical rationale and medical services rendered to support appropriate ICD-10 code(s) according to official billing and coding guidelines, procedures, and regulations.