A sound practical approach, which considers best clinical practice consistent with indications for bariatric surgery, is to define obesity as follows:

- BMI of 40 kg/m\(^2\) or more is morbid obesity.
- BMI of 35.0 to 39.9 kg/m\(^2\) plus at least one significant related comorbidity is severe obesity.
- BMI of 35.0 to 39.9 kg/m\(^2\) without comorbidity is obesity.
- BMI of 30.0 to 34.9 kg/m\(^2\) is obesity.

For the purposes of ICD-10-CM, these would be assigned the following codes: E66.01, E66.01, E66.9, and E66.9, respectively.

A BMI of 40 kg/m\(^2\) or more is classified as a comorbidity/com complication (CC) that has an impact on the diagnosis-related group and severity of illness classification. Descriptive terms, such as severe obesity, are not CCs because the significance of the condition is captured more accurately by the BMI codes (Table 2) and clinicians sometimes use a descriptive term that doesn’t match the BMI.

Obesity hypoventilation syndrome, also known as Pickwickian syndrome, is a condition in which poor breathing results in daytime somnolence with hypoxemia and hypercapnia in patients with a BMI greater than 30 kg/m\(^2\). This condition is assigned code E66.2, which is also a CC; this code can be used even for patients with a BMI less than 40 kg/m\(^2\).

The WHO describes obesity as a type of “malnutrition,” but controversy and confusion sometimes arise over the notion that obesity has become one of the most serious public health problems in the United States and many other developed nations. A study published in the New England Journal of Medicine in 2017 analyzed data from 68.5 million people worldwide and estimated that over 600 million people on the planet were obese in 2015.