

# BENEFIT COVERAGE POLICY

**Title:** BCP-32 Bariatric Surgery

**Effective Date:** 07/01/2018



Physicians Health Plan  
PHP Insurance Company  
PHP Service Company

## Important Information - Please Read Before Using This Policy

The following coverage policy applies to health benefit plans administered by PHP and may not be covered by all PHP plans. Please refer to the member's benefit document for specific coverage information. If there is a difference between this general information and the member's benefit document, the member's benefit document will be used to determine coverage. For example, a member's benefit document may contain a specific exclusion related to a topic addressed in a coverage policy.

Coverage determinations for individual requests require consideration of:

1. The terms of the applicable benefit document in effect on the date of service.
2. Any applicable laws and regulations.
3. Any relevant collateral source materials including coverage policies.
4. The specific facts of the situation.

Contact PHP Customer Service to discuss plan benefits more specifically.

### 1.0 Policy:

Health Plan covers bariatric surgery when clinical criteria as described below are met and covered services are received from network providers.

Services for bariatric surgery require prior approval for the health service being provided.

For all non-network covered services to be paid at the network benefit level except for emergency/urgent services, prior approval is required.

Refer to member's benefit coverage document for specific benefit description, guidelines, coverage, and exclusions.

### 2.0 Background:

Obesity and overweight are defined clinically using the body mass index (BMI). BMI is an objective measurement and is currently considered the most reproducible measurement of total body fat. The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI) defines the following classifications based on BMI. The NHLBI recommends that the BMI should be used to classify overweight and obesity and to estimate relative risk for disease compared to normal weight.

Classification	BMI (kg/m <sup>2</sup> )
Underweight	< 18.5
Normal weight	18.5–24.9
Overweight	25–29.9
Obesity (Class 1)	30–34.9
Obesity (Class 2)	35–39.9
Extreme Obesity (Class 3)	≥ 40

To calculate BMI, go to: [https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose\\_wt/BMI/bmicalc.htm](https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose_wt/BMI/bmicalc.htm).

Treatment of obesity is generally described as a two-part process:

1. Assessment, including BMI measurement and risk factor identification; and
2. Treatment/management.

Obesity management includes primary weight loss, prevention of weight regain and the management of associated risk. During the assessment phase, the individual needs to be prepared for the comprehensive nature of the program, including realistic timelines and goals.

Clinical supervision is an essential component of dietary management. According to the NHLBI, “frequent clinical encounters during the initial six months of weight reduction appear to facilitate reaching the goals of therapy. During the period of active weight loss, regular visits of at least once per month and preferably more often with a health professional for the purposes of reinforcement, encouragement, and monitoring will facilitate weight reduction” (NHLBI, 1998). Physicians can also provide clinical oversight and monitoring of what are often complex comorbid conditions and can select the optimal and most medically appropriate weight management, nutritional and exercise strategies.

Bariatric surgeons and centers advocate for preoperative weight loss, as patients who can achieve weight loss are most likely to have a reduction in operative morbidity and surgical risk. Identification of individuals who will be committed to and compliant with short-term, long-term and lifelong medical management follow-up, behavioral changes, lifestyle changes, diet and a physical exercise regimen are most likely to achieve successful outcomes after surgery.

The NHLBI recommends weight-loss surgery as an option for carefully-selected adult patients with clinically severe obesity (BMI of 40 or greater; or BMI of 35 or greater with serious comorbid conditions) when less-invasive methods of weight loss have failed, and the patient is at high risk for obesity-associated morbidity or mortality. Surgical therapy for morbid obesity is not only effective in producing weight loss but is also effective in improving several significant complications of obesity, including diabetes, hypertension, dyslipidemia, and sleep apnea. The degree of benefit and the rates of morbidity and mortality of the various surgical procedures vary according to the procedure.

Access to a multidisciplinary team approach, involving a physician with a special interest in obesity; a surgeon with extensive experience in bariatric procedures, a dietitian or nutritionist; and a psychologist, psychiatrist or licensed mental health care provider interested in behavior modification and eating disorders, is optimal. A mental health evaluation should specifically address any mental health or substance abuse diagnoses, the emotional readiness and ability of the patient to make and sustain lifestyle changes, and the adequacy of their support system. Realistic expectations about the degree of weight loss, the compromises required by the patient and the positive effect on associated weight-related comorbidities and quality of life should be discussed and contrasted with the potential morbidity and operative mortality of bariatric surgery.

With bariatric surgery procedures, patients lose an average of 50–60% of excess body weight and have a decrease in BMI of about 10kg/m<sup>2</sup> during the first 12–24 postoperative months. Many long-term studies show a tendency for a modest weight gain (5–7 kg) after the initial postoperative years; long-term maintenance of an overall mean weight loss of about 50% of excess body weight can be expected.

### **3.0 Clinical Determination Guidelines:**

- A. Bariatric surgery is considered medically necessary and appropriate when ALL the following conditions are met:
  1. The individual is  $\geq$  18 years of age or has reached full expected skeletal growth; AND
  2. There is a diagnosis of morbid obesity as defined as body mass index (BMI) equal to or greater than 40, OR equal to or greater than 35 with co-morbidities as listed below:
    - a. Medical documentation by a physician or a physician supervised weight management program designee, that includes two medical conditions that are a consequence of his/her obesity in the following categories:

- i. Poorly controlled hypertension despite being compliant on one or more medications; blood pressure with three readings on different occasions documenting a systolic blood pressure  $\geq 140$  mm Hg or diastolic blood pressure  $\geq 90$  mm Hg. (changed from 170/100 to match criteria from other payers).
  - ii. Diabetes with Hgb A<sub>1</sub>C  $>7.0$  on one or more medications and/or insulin.
  - iii. Breathing insufficiency related to obesity with a pCO<sub>2</sub> blood gas reading greater or equal to 50 or pO<sub>2</sub> blood gas reading less than or equal to 55.
  - iv. Uncontrolled hyperlipidemia not amenable to optimal conventional treatment such as a genetic condition for extremely high blood lipid levels (cholesterol and triglyceride) as documented by appropriate laboratory tests and not responding to treatment with dietary restriction, prescription drugs and other generally accepted treatments.
  - v. Significant cardiac disease (e.g., ASHD, RVH or LVH).
  - vi. Symptomatic sleep apnea not controlled by C-PAP or Bi-Pap.
3. Medical management including evidence of active participation within the last 12 months in a weight-management program that is supervised by a physician, physician's assistant, nurse practitioner or a registered dietician for a minimum of six consecutive months (i.e.,  $\geq 180$  days) and six office visits. The weight-management program must include monthly documentation of ALL the following components:
- a. Actual measured weight and calculated BMI.
  - b. Current dietary program.
  - c. Physical activity (exercise program).
  - d. Weight loss medication, if applicable.
  - e. Weight-related conditions (e.g., diabetes, hypertension, hyperlipidemia, etc.) are being addressed.
- Programs such as Weight Watchers<sup>®</sup> or Optifast<sup>®</sup> are acceptable alternatives if done under the supervision of a physician, physician's assistant, nurse practitioner, or registered dietician and detailed documentation of participation is available for review. However, physician-supervised programs consisting exclusively of medication management are not sufficient to meet this requirement, AND
- 4. A psychological evaluation is completed prior to surgery that establishes the member's emotional stability and ability to comply with post-surgical limitations. This requires a referral by the member's primary care physician to a multidisciplinary team and Health Plan reserves the right to require an external psychiatric evaluation, AND
  - 5. An evaluation by a bariatric surgeon recommending surgical treatment, including a description of the proposed procedure(s) and all the associated CPT codes, AND
  - 6. A nutritional evaluation by a physician or registered dietician
    - a. Coverage is limited to one bariatric surgery per lifetime, unless medically necessary. A second bariatric surgery is not covered, even if the initial bariatric surgery occurred prior to coverage under the Health Plan or there is a poor response to primary bariatric surgery due to patient post-operative behavior (not following dietary restrictions, large portion meals, or lack of documented exercise).
- (Note: See member's benefit plan language, Glossary of Defined Terms, definition of "medically necessary.")

B. Not covered:

1. Exclusions due to being experimental/investigational/unproven and excluded by plan benefit language are:
  - a. Gastric banding with devices that are not FDA-approved.
  - b. Gastric balloon and space occupying devices (e.g. Orbera, Reshape Duo).
  - c. Mini-gastric bypass procedure.
  - d. Gastroplasty (gastric stapling).
  - e. Intestinal bypass alone (jejunioileal bypass).
  - f. Endoscopic revision of bariatric surgery, including the ROSE™ (Revision Obesity Surgery, Endoscopic) and Stomaphyx™ procedures.
  - g. Vagal Blocking for Obesity Control (e.g., vBLOC, Maestro® Rechargeable System).
  - h. AspireAssist device.
2. Bariatric surgery for a member with one or more of the following conditions: active substance abuse, defined non-compliance with previous medical care, terminal disease, pregnancy, or severe psychopathology.

C. Limitation of benefit - Lap-band conversion to a sleeve gastrectomy or lap-band conversion to a Roux-en-Y procedure is limited by lifetime benefit unless medically/ clinically necessary to correct or reverse complication from a previous bariatric procedure.

**4.0 Coding:**

Prior Approval Legend: Y = All lines of business; N = None required; 1 = HMO/POS; 2 = PPO; 3 = ASO L0000264; 4 = ASO L0001269 Non-Union; 5 = ASO L0001631; 6 = ASO L2011; 7 = ASO L0001269 Union.

<b>COVERED CODES</b>			
<b>Code</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Prior Approval</b>	<b>COC Reference</b>
00797	Anesthesia for procedures on upper anterior abdominal wall; gastric restrictive procedure for morbid obesity	N	Benefits and Coverage, Morbid Obesity Treatment – Bariatric Surgery
43644	Laparoscopy, surgical, gastric restrictive procedure; with gastric bypass and Roux-en-Y gastroenterostomy (roux limb 150 cm or less)	Y	Benefits and Coverage, Morbid Obesity Treatment – Bariatric Surgery
43645	Laparoscopy, surgical, gastric restrictive procedure; with gastric bypass and small intestine reconstruction to limit absorption	Y	Benefits and Coverage, Morbid Obesity Treatment – Bariatric Surgery OR Bariatric Surgery
43659	Unlisted laparoscopy procedure, stomach	Y	Benefits and Coverage, Morbid Obesity Treatment – Bariatric Surgery OR Bariatric Surgery
43770	Laparoscopy, surgical, gastric restrictive procedure; placement of adjustable gastric band (gastric band and subcutaneous port components)	Y	Benefits and Coverage, Morbid Obesity Treatment – Bariatric Surgery OR Bariatric

<b>COVERED CODES</b>			
<b>Code</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Prior Approval</b>	<b>COC Reference</b>
			Surgery
43771	Laparoscopy surgical, gastric restrictive procedure; revision of adjustable gastric band component only	Y	Benefits and Coverage, Morbid Obesity Treatment – Bariatric Surgery OR Bariatric Surgery
43772	Laparoscopy surgical, gastric restrictive procedure; removal of adjustable gastric band component only	Y	Benefits and Coverage, Morbid Obesity Treatment – Bariatric Surgery OR Bariatric Surgery
43773	Laparoscopy, gastric restrictive procedure; removal and replacement of adjustable gastric band component only	Y	Benefits and Coverage, Morbid Obesity Treatment – Bariatric Surgery OR Bariatric Surgery
43774	Laparoscopy surgical, gastric restrictive procedure	Y	Benefits and Coverage, Morbid Obesity Treatment – Bariatric Surgery OR Bariatric Surgery
43775	Laparoscopy, surgical, gastric restrictive procedure; longitudinal gastrectomy (i.e., sleeve gastrectomy)	Y	Benefits and Coverage, Morbid Obesity Treatment – Bariatric Surgery OR Bariatric Surgery
43842	Gastric restrictive procedure, without gastric bypass, for morbid obesity; vertical-banded gastroplasty	Y	Benefits and Coverage, Morbid Obesity Treatment – Bariatric Surgery OR Bariatric Surgery
43843	Gastric restrictive procedure, without gastric bypass, for morbid obesity; other than vertical-banded gastroplasty	Y	Benefits and Coverage, Morbid Obesity Treatment – Bariatric Surgery OR Bariatric Surgery
43845	Gastric restrictive procedure with partial gastrectomy, pylorus-preserving duodenoileostomy and ileoileostomy (50 to 100 cm common channel) to limit absorption (biliopancreatic diversion with duodenal switch)	Y	Benefits and Coverage, Morbid Obesity Treatment – Bariatric Surgery OR Bariatric Surgery
43846	Gastric restrictive procedure, with gastric bypass for morbid obesity, with short limb (150 cm or less) Roux-en-Y gastroenterostomy	Y	Benefits and Coverage, Morbid Obesity Treatment – Bariatric Surgery OR Bariatric Surgery
43847	Gastric restrictive procedure, with gastric bypass for morbid obesity, with small intestine reconstruction to limit absorption	Y	Benefits and Coverage, Morbid Obesity Treatment – Bariatric

<b>COVERED CODES</b>			
<b>Code</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Prior Approval</b>	<b>COC Reference</b>
			Surgery OR Bariatric Surgery
43848	Revision, open, of gastric restrictive procedure for morbid obesity, other than adjustable gastric restrictive device (separate procedure)	Y	Benefits and Coverage, Morbid Obesity Treatment – Bariatric Surgery OR Bariatric Surgery
43886	Gastric restrictive procedure, open; revision of subcutaneous port component only	Y	Benefits and Coverage, Morbid Obesity Treatment – Bariatric Surgery OR Bariatric Surgery
43887	Gastric restrictive procedure, open; removal of subcutaneous port component only	Y	Benefits and Coverage, Morbid Obesity Treatment – Bariatric Surgery OR Bariatric Surgery
43888	Gastric restrictive procedure, open; removal and replacement of subcutaneous port component only	Y	Benefits and Coverage, Morbid Obesity Treatment – Bariatric Surgery OR Bariatric Surgery
43999	Unlisted procedure, stomach when billed for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balloon gastroplasty</li> <li>• Endoscopic revision of bariatric surgery</li> <li>• Open gastric band</li> <li>• Laparoscopic vertical banded gastroplasty</li> </ul>	Y	Benefits and Coverage, Morbid Obesity Treatment – Bariatric Surgery OR Bariatric Surgery
S2083	Adjustment of gastric band diameter via subcutaneous port by injection or aspiration of saline	N	Benefits and Coverage, Physician Office Services – Sickness/Injury OR Professional Fees for Surgical and Medical Services

**ICD-10 Codes Associated with Services**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Description</b>
E66.01	Morbid (severe) obesity due to excess calories
E66.09	Other obesity due to excess calories
E66.3	Overweight
E66.9	Obesity, unspecified
E67.8	Other specified hyperalimentation
K95.09	Other complications of gastric band procedure
K95.89	Other complications of other bariatric procedure
Z46.51	Encounter for fitting and adjustment of gastric lap band
Z98.84	Bariatric surgery status
Z46.51	Encounter for fitting and adjustment of gastric lap band

ICD-10 Codes Associated with Services	
Code	Description
Z68.35 – Z68.39	Body mass index (BMI) 35.0 – 39.9, adult
Z68.41 – Z68.45	Body mass index (BMI) 40.0 – 70 or greater, adult
Z68.54	Body mass index (BMI) pediatric, greater than or equal to 95 <sup>th</sup> percentile for age

NON-COVERED CODES		
Code	Description	COC Reference/Reason
43632	Gastrectomy, partial, distal; with gastrojejunostomy. (Gastric bypass using a Billroth II type anastomosis, also known as a “mini gastric bypass”)	What’s Not Covered; Experimental, investigational, unproven
0312T	Vagus nerve blocking therapy (morbid obesity), laparoscopic implantation of neurostimulator electrode array, anterior and posterior vagal trunks adjacent to esophagogastric junction (EGJ), with implantation of pulse generator, includes programming	What’s Not Covered; Experimental, investigational, unproven
0313T	... laparoscopic revision or replacement of vagal trunk neurostimulator electrode array, including connection to existing pulse generator	What’s Not Covered; Experimental, investigational, unproven
0314T	... laparoscopic removal of vagal trunk neurostimulator electrode array and pulse generator	What’s Not Covered; Experimental, investigational, unproven
0315T	... removal of pulse generator	What’s Not Covered; Experimental, investigational, unproven
0316T	... replacement of pulse generator	What’s Not Covered; Experimental, investigational, unproven
0317T	... neurostimulator pulse generator electronic analysis, includes reprogramming when performed	What’s Not Covered; Experimental, investigational, unproven

### 5.0 Unique Configuration/Prior Approval/Coverage Details:

None.

### 6.0 Terms & Definitions:

Body mass index (BMI) - An objective measurement of total body fat. BMI calculator: [http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose\\_wt/BMI/bmicalc.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose_wt/BMI/bmicalc.htm).

Combined restrictive and malabsorptive surgical procedures. Restricts meal size and may alter the digestion process, thus causing food to be completely absorbed. Examples of combined restrictive and malabsorptive surgical procedures include Roux-en-Y gastric bypass and biliopancreatic diversion with duodenal switch.

Gastric bypass - A surgical procedure that reduces the stomach capacity and diverts partially digested food from the duodenum to the jejunum.

Gastroplasty - A surgical procedure that decreases the size of the stomach.

Restrictive surgical procedures - Reduces the size of the stomach and limits the amount of food that can be ingested at one time. Surgical incision and resection of the intestine is not involved. Examples of purely restrictive operations for morbid obesity include vertical banded gastroplasty and adjustable silicone gastric banding (Lap Band).

**7.0 References, Citations & Resources:**

1. MCG Inpatient & Surgical Care 21<sup>st</sup> Edition, S-512 Gastric Restrictive Procedure with Gastric Bypass, 02/02/2017.
2. MCG Inpatient & Surgical Care 21<sup>st</sup> Edition, S-513 Gastric Restrictive Procedure with Gastric Bypass by Laparoscopy, 02/02/2017.
3. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI). The Practical Guide: Identification, Evaluation, and Treatment of Overweight and Obesity in Adults. October 2000. Accessed October 28, 2016. Available at: [http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/obesity/prctgd\\_c.pdf](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/obesity/prctgd_c.pdf).

**8.0 Associated Documents [For internal use only]:**

Business Process Flow (BPF) – None.

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) – MM-03 Benefit Determinations; MM-25 Transition/Continuity of Care; MM-55 Peer-to-Peer Conversations; SOP 007 Algorithm for Use of Criteria for Benefit Determinations.

Desk Level Procedure (DLP) – None.

Letters - TCS Approval Letter; Clinically Reviewed Exclusion Letter; Partial Coverage, Partial Non-Coverage Letter; Specific Exclusion Denial Letter

Forms – CC Tools/Forms/ Request Form: Bariatric Surgery.

Other – None.

**9.0 Revision History:**

Original Effective Date: 12/01/2016

Revision Dates: 5/17, 3/18

Last Approval Date: 05/02/2018

Next Revision Date: 05/02/2019

<b>Revision History</b>	
Revision Date & Approval	Reason for Revision
November 2016	MRMBD 03 Morbid Obesity Program policy archived. Bariatric Surgery criteria revised into a new policy. Deleted ICD-9 code table. Removing prior approval requirement for outpatient weight management services.
February 2017	Converted from Medical Policy 036 to BCP format
May 2017	Removed PA requirement for Lap-band adjustments, added CPT code 00797
March 2018	Removed BH codes 96150, 96151 and 96152.