


MEDICAL POLICY	Bariatric Surgery (All Lines of Business Except Medicare)	
Effective Date: 10/1/2020  <div style="text-align: right;">10/1/2020</div>	Section: SUR	Policy No: 142
	Technology Assessment Committee Approved Date: 3/04; 9/05; 4/12; 4/16 Medical Policy Committee Approved Date: 11/99; 3/00; 6/01; 6/02; 2/03; 11/03; 3/04; 6/05; 9/07; 7/09; 1/10; 7/10; 6/13; 1/15; 11/15; 12/15; 5/17; 6/18; 8/19; 3/2020; 9/2020	
Medical Officer	Date	

See Policy CPT CODE section below for any prior authorization requirements

SCOPE:

Providence Health Plan, Providence Health Assurance, Providence Plan Partners, and Ayin Health Solutions as applicable (referred to individually as “Company” and collectively as “Companies”).

APPLIES TO:

All lines of business except Medicare

BENEFIT APPLICATION

Medicaid Members

Oregon: Services requested for Oregon Health Plan (OHP) members follow the OHP Prioritized List and Oregon Administrative Rules (OARs) as the primary resource for coverage determinations. Medical policy criteria below may be applied when there are no criteria available in the OARs and the OHP Prioritized List.

DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

The following information must be submitted to determine if medical necessity criteria are met:

- Medical records document the following components of the bariatric evaluation:
 - Body mass index (BMI).
 - Nutritional counseling.
 - A behavioral health evaluation.
- If BMI is between 35-39.9 kg/m², clinical documentation that hypertension, obstructive sleep apnea, or gastroesophageal reflux disease has not responded to optimum medical management and/or type II diabetes mellitus.
- Documentation of a preoperative medical consultation which indicates all of the following:
 - The patient has been determined to be a suitable bariatric surgery candidate; and

MEDICAL POLICY	Bariatric Surgery (All Lines of Business Except Medicare)
-----------------------	--

- The patient has received a thorough explanation of the risks, benefits, and the expected post-operative outcomes of bariatric surgery; and
- The patient’s treatment plan includes post-operative dietary evaluations, nutrition and exercise counseling, and supportive resources available as needed.

Note: The presence of gastroesophageal reflux (GERD) or other condition does not negate the requirement for pre-surgical evaluation.

POLICY CRITERIA

Note: Member benefits, which address coverage or non-coverage of specific bariatric surgery services, may vary. Member benefit contract language takes precedent over medical policy.

Initial Bariatric Surgery

I. The following bariatric surgical procedures may be considered **medically necessary and covered** for the treatment of morbid obesity in adults:

- Roux-en-Y gastric bypass with an alimentary limb of 150 cm or less; **or**
- sleeve gastrectomy

(Note: biliopancreatic bypass with duodenal switch is addressed in criterion II. below.)

when **all** of the following (A.-D.) criteria are met:

A. **One** of the following (1. **or** 2.) criteria is met:

1. Body mass index (BMI) at the start of the bariatric surgery program is ≥ 40 kg/m²; **or**
2. BMI at the start of the bariatric surgery program is between 35.0-39.9 kg/m² and the patient has **any** of the following (a.-d.) comorbid conditions:
 - a. Type II diabetes mellitus; **or**
 - b. Hypertension which has not responded to optimal medical management; **or**
 - c. Life-threatening cardio-pulmonary disease (severe obstructive sleep apnea [defined as an AHI or RDI ≥ 30], obesity hypoventilation syndrome) which has not responded to optimal medical management; **or**
 - d. Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) which has not responded to optimal medical management and is refractory to Nissen fundoplication (Note: The presence of gastroesophageal reflux (GERD) or other condition does not negate the requirement for pre-surgical evaluation); **and**

B. Patient is ≥ 18 years old; **and**

C. Patient has had a behavioral health evaluation showing no contraindication for bariatric surgery; **and**

D. Medical records document **all** of the following (1.-4.) pre-operative requirements for bariatric surgery have been completed **within 6 months prior to surgery**:

MEDICAL POLICY

**Bariatric Surgery
(All Lines of Business Except
Medicare)**

1. The patient has undergone a bariatric surgery evaluation, which includes documentation of nutritional counseling and compliance with dietary and exercise recommendations made at the initial surgery visit and follow-up visits; **and**
 2. The patient has undergone a pre-operative medical consultation and is determined to be a suitable bariatric surgery candidate; **and**
 3. The patient has received a thorough explanation of the risks, benefits, and the expected post-operative outcomes of bariatric surgery; **and**
 4. The patient's treatment plan includes post-operative dietary evaluations, nutrition and exercise counseling, and supportive resources available as needed; **and**
 - E. The bariatric surgery is performed at a Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery Accreditation and Quality Improvement Program (MBSAQIP) accredited center (see [Policy Guidelines](#) below for more information). (Note: Specific member benefits may vary and take precedence over medical policy. Please see member benefits for additional information regarding centers of excellence.)
- II. Biliopancreatic bypass with duodenal switch may be considered **medically necessary and covered** when **all** of the following (A.-B.) criteria are met:
- A. Body mass index (BMI) ≥ 50 kg/m²; **and**
 - B. Criteria I.B.-I.D. above are met.
- III. Bariatric surgery is considered **not medically necessary and is not covered** when criterion I. or II. above is not met, including but not limited to, the following:
- A. Patients with a BMI of 30-34.9 kg/m², regardless of comorbidities; **or**
 - B. For the treatment of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) or non-alcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH); **or**
 - C. For the treatment of gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) that does not meet criterion I.A.2.d. above.

Non-Covered Bariatric Surgery

- IV. The following bariatric surgery procedures are considered **not medically necessary and are not covered** for all indications:
- A. Adjustable gastric banding (i.e., Lap-Band® system)
 - B. Biliopancreatic bypass without duodenal switch (i.e., the Scopinaro procedure)
 - C. Vertical banded gastroplasty
- V. The following bariatric surgery procedures are considered **investigational and are not covered** for all indications:
- A. Vagus nerve blocking (e.g., Maestro)

MEDICAL POLICY

Bariatric Surgery (All Lines of Business Except Medicare)

- B. Intra-gastric balloon (IGB)
- C. Single-anastomosis duodenal switch
- D. Transpyloric shuttle (TPS)
- E. Gastric electrical stimulation
- F. Duodenal-jejunal bypass liner (e.g., EndoBarrier™ Gastrointestinal Liner)
- G. Transoral gastroplasty (e.g., TOGA® system)
- H. Mini-gastric bypass
- I. Parietal cell separating gastrojejunostomy when used to treat gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) in the setting of morbid obesity
- J. Endoscopic procedures as the primary bariatric procedure (e.g., endoscopic gastric sleeve)

Repeat Bariatric Surgery Due to Inadequate Weight Loss

VI. A repeat bariatric surgery, following an initial, primary bariatric procedure, may be considered **medically necessary and covered** due to inadequate weight loss when **all** of the following (A.-D.) criteria are met:

- A. There is documentation of full compliance with the previously prescribed postoperative dietary and exercise program; **and**
- B. There is technical failure of the original bariatric surgical procedure (e.g., pouch dilatation) documented by imaging or an endoscope; **and**
- C. The patient has failed to achieve adequate weight loss, which is defined as failure within two (2) years to lose at least 50% of excess body weight due to technical failure; **and**
- D. The proposed repeat bariatric procedure is considered medically necessary.

Note: Repeat bariatric surgeries are limited to once per life time. A third, bariatric procedure following an initial, primary procedure and a secondary, repeat procedure is not covered.

Revision or Conversion Bariatric Surgery Due to Complications NOT Related to an Adjustable Gastric Band

VII. Surgical repair, reversal (i.e., take down), or conversion to a different, medically necessary bariatric surgery may be considered **medically necessary and covered** as treatment of **any one or more** of the following (A.-M.) documented major complication related to the primary bariatric procedure:

- A. Barrett's Esophagus
- B. Bleeding
- C. Fistula
- D. Internal hernia or ventral hernia
- E. Gastric prolapse
- F. Infection
- G. Leak/perforation

MEDICAL POLICY

**Bariatric Surgery
(All Lines of Business Except
Medicare)**

- H. Metabolic derangement
- I. Obstruction
- J. Stricture
- K. Stomal Stenosis
- L. Ulcer
- M. Excess weight loss to $\leq 80\%$ or less of ideal body weight

Revision or Conversion Bariatric Surgery Due to Complications Related to the Adjustable Band

Major Complications Related to Band Placement

VIII. Surgical repair or removal of an adjustable gastric or surgical conversion of an adjustable gastric band to a sleeve gastrectomy or bypass may be considered **medically necessary and covered** as a treatment of **any one or more** of the following (A.-D.) documented major complication related to band placement, which cannot be corrected with manipulation or adjustment (i.e., deflation):

- A. Any **one or more** of the major complications listed in criterion VII.; **or**
- B. Band or balloon rupture; **or**
- C. Image documentation of erosion, perforation, or slippage; **or**
- D. Port malfunction.

Symptoms Related to Band Placement in the Absence of Major Complications

Note: if major complication is present in conjunction with any of the symptoms noted below, please apply criterion VIII.

IX. Surgical repair or removal of an adjustable gastric band or surgical conversion of an adjustable gastric band to a sleeve gastrectomy or bypass may be considered **medically necessary and covered** as a treatment of symptoms related to band placement, when endoscopic imaging indicates no major complications are present and **any one** of the following criteria (A.-C.) are met:

Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD) and/or Respiratory Symptoms of Coughing and/or Aspiration

- A. Treatment of GERD when **all** of the following (1.-3.) criteria are met:
 - 1. There is documentation of full compliance with the previously prescribed postoperative dietary and exercise program; **and**
 - 2. If patient has respiratory symptoms, documents must indicate patient has refrained from smoking for three (3) months; **and**
 - 3. GERD symptoms are refractory to **both** of the following (a.-b.) initial treatments:
 - a. Band manipulation or adjustment, which includes band deflation; **and**

MEDICAL POLICY

Bariatric Surgery (All Lines of Business Except Medicare)

b. Anti-reflux medication

Vomiting

- B. Treatment of vomiting when **both** of the following (1.-2.) criteria are met:
1. There is documentation of full compliance with the previously prescribed postoperative dietary and exercise program; **and**
 2. Vomiting is persistent despite band manipulation or adjustment, which includes band deflation.

Dilation of the Esophagus or Stomach or Esophageal Dysmotility

- C. Treatment of esophageal or stomach dilation when **both** of the following (1.-2.) criteria are met:
1. There is documentation of full compliance with the previously prescribed postoperative dietary and exercise program; **and**
 2. Esophageal or stomach dilation or esophageal dysmotility is persistent despite band manipulation or adjustment, which includes band deflation.

Non-covered Repeat Procedures

- X. Repeat bariatric surgery or surgical repair, revision, or conversion is considered **not medically necessary and is not covered** when any of the above criteria (VI.-IX.) are not met, including, but not limited to, any of the following:
- A. Dissatisfaction with a previous bariatric procedure
 - B. Early satiety
 - C. Weight gain after weight loss of 50% or more of excess body weight in the absence of any complications or symptoms as described above in criteria VI.-IX.
- XI. Transoral outlet reduction (TORe) following bariatric surgery is considered **investigational and is not covered** following bariatric surgery to treat dilated gastrojejunostomy (GJ) outlet.

Link to [Policy Summary](#)

POLICY GUIDELINES

Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery Accreditation and Quality Improvement Program (MBSAQIP)

The Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery Accreditation and Quality Improvement Program (MBSAQIP) is administered through the American College of Surgeons (ACS) and the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS). This program “works to advance safe, high-quality care for bariatric

MEDICAL POLICY	Bariatric Surgery (All Lines of Business Except Medicare)
-----------------------	--

surgical patients through the accreditation of bariatric surgical centers. A bariatric surgical center achieves accreditation following a rigorous review process during which it proves that it can maintain certain physical resources, human resources, and standards of practice. All accredited centers report their outcomes to the MBSAQIP database.”¹

The MBSAQIP Standards Manual provides detailed information on the accreditation requirements.² In general, to become an accredited comprehensive inpatient center the facility must demonstrate the following:

- Center has demonstrated compliance with all MBSAQIP Core Standards and successfully completed a site visit. The MBSAQIP Core Standards include:
 - Case Volume, Patient Selection, and Approved Procedures by Designation Level
 - Commitment to Quality Care
 - Appropriate Equipment and Instruments
 - Critical Care Support
 - Continuum of Care
 - Data Collection (and reporting to MBSAQIP)
 - Continuous Quality Improvement
- Center performs a minimum of 50 approved bariatric stapling procedures annually, and the MBS Clinical Reviewer enters data into the MBSAQIP Data Registry Platform.

The following link provides a search function for identifying MBSAQIP certified centers:

<https://www.facs.org/search/bariatric-surgery-centers>

Of note, there are currently no MBSAQIP-accredited adolescent bariatric surgery centers in Oregon or Washington.

Body Mass Index (BMI)³

Metric BMI Formula: BMI= weight (kg) ÷ height² (m²)

Imperial BMI Formula: BMI= weight (lb) ÷ height² (in²) x 703

- Obesity is defined as a BMI of 30.0 kg/m² or higher.
- Obesity is frequently divided into categories:
 - Class I: BMI of 30 kg/m² to < 35 kg/m²
 - Class II: BMI of 35 kg/m² to < 40 kg/m²
 - Class III: BMI of 40 kg/m² or higher.
 - A BMI of 40-49.9 kg/m² is considered morbidly obese.
 - A BMI of 50 kg/m² or more is considered superobesity or super morbid obesity.

BILLING GUIDELINES

MEDICAL POLICY	Bariatric Surgery (All Lines of Business Except Medicare)
-----------------------	--

Only the codes listed on this policy may be used for reporting bariatric procedures. Codes 43631-43634 are specific to gastrectomy and should not be used to report bariatric procedures.

Code 43843 should not be used when there is a procedure-specific bariatric surgery code.

CPT CODES

All Lines of Business Except Medicare	
Prior Authorization Required	
43843	Gastric restrictive procedure, without gastric bypass, for morbid obesity; other than vertical-banded gastroplasty
Roux-en-Y Gastric Bypass	
43644	Laparoscopy, surgical, gastric restrictive procedure; with gastric bypass and Roux-en-Y gastroenterostomy (roux limb 150 cm or less)
43645	Laparoscopy, surgical, gastric restrictive procedure; with gastric bypass and small intestine reconstruction to limit absorption
43846	Gastric restrictive procedure, with gastric bypass for morbid obesity; with short limb (150 cm or less) Roux-en-Y gastroenterostomy
43847	Gastric restrictive procedure, with gastric bypass for morbid obesity; with small intestine reconstruction to limit absorption
Sleeve Gastrectomy	
43775	Laparoscopy, surgical, gastric restrictive procedure; longitudinal gastrectomy (ie, sleeve gastrectomy)
Biliopancreatic Bypass with Duodenal Switch	
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)
Removal/Revision of Bariatric Surgery	
43771	Laparoscopy, surgical, gastric restrictive procedure; revision of adjustable gastric restrictive device component only
43772	Laparoscopy, surgical, gastric restrictive procedure; removal of adjustable gastric restrictive device component only
43774	Laparoscopy, surgical, gastric restrictive procedure; removal of adjustable gastric restrictive device and subcutaneous port components
43848	Revision, open, of gastric restrictive procedure for morbid obesity, other than adjustable gastric restrictive device (separate procedure)
43850	Revision of gastroduodenal anastomosis (gastroduodenostomy) with reconstruction; without vagotomy
43855	Revision of gastroduodenal anastomosis (gastroduodenostomy) with reconstruction; with vagotomy

MEDICAL POLICY	Bariatric Surgery (All Lines of Business Except Medicare)
-----------------------	--

43860	Revision of gastrojejunal anastomosis (gastrojejunostomy) with reconstruction, with or without partial gastrectomy or intestine resection; without vagotomy
43865	Revision of gastrojejunal anastomosis (gastrojejunostomy) with reconstruction, with or without partial gastrectomy or intestine resection; with vagotomy
43886	Gastric restrictive procedure, open; revision of subcutaneous port component only
43887	Gastric restrictive procedure, open; removal of subcutaneous port component only
43888	Gastric restrictive procedure, open; removal and replacement of subcutaneous port component only
Not Covered	
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
0313T	Vagus nerve blocking therapy (morbid obesity); laparoscopic revision or replacement of vagal trunk neurostimulator electrode array, including connection to existing pulse generator
0316T	Vagus nerve blocking therapy (morbid obesity); replacement of pulse generator
0317T	Vagus nerve blocking therapy (morbid obesity); neurostimulator pulse generator electronic analysis, includes reprogramming when performed
43770	Laparoscopy, surgical, gastric restrictive procedure; placement of adjustable gastric restrictive device (eg, gastric band and subcutaneous port components)
43773	Laparoscopy, surgical, gastric restrictive procedure; removal and replacement of adjustable gastric restrictive device component only
43842	Gastric restrictive procedure, without gastric bypass, for morbid obesity; vertical-banded gastroplasty
Unlisted Codes	
All unlisted codes will be reviewed for medical necessity, correct coding, and pricing at the claim level. If an unlisted code is billed related to services addressed in this policy then prior-authorization is required.	
43659	Unlisted laparoscopy procedure, stomach
43999	Unlisted procedure, stomach

DESCRIPTION

Obesity

Approximately 78.6 million adults and 12.7 million children in the United States are obese.⁴ The causes of obesity are complex and may result from behavioral, genetic, and societal factors. Obesity is associated with an increased risk for several conditions, including hypertension, dyslipidemia, type II diabetes mellitus, coronary heart disease, stroke, gall bladder disease, osteoarthritis, sleep apnea and breathing problems, certain cancers, and mental illness.

MEDICAL POLICY	Bariatric Surgery (All Lines of Business Except Medicare)
-----------------------	--

“The mainstay of treatment for obesity is a reduced-calorie diet along with increased activity and exercise. Patients may undergo an intensive lifestyle intervention that combines dietary modification, exercise, and behavioral counseling.”⁴ Additionally, severely obese patients or obese patient with a comorbid condition may also receive medication. Severely obese patients may also undergo bariatric surgery to promote significant weight loss. The main types of bariatric surgery are Roux-en-Y gastric bypass, adjustable gastric banding, sleeve gastrectomy, and biliopancreatic bypass with duodenal switch.

Bariatric Surgery Procedure	Description
Roux-en-Y gastric bypass⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Combines restriction and malabsorption by creating both a small gastric pouch and a bypass that prevents the patient from absorbing all they have eaten.
Sleeve gastrectomy⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Divides the stomach vertically to reduce its size about 25%. Leaves the pyloric valve at the bottom of the stomach intact so the stomach function and digestion are unaltered
Biliopancreatic bypass (BPB) with duodenal switch⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily a malabsorptive procedure Involves removal of part of the stomach to limit oral intake and induce weight loss. The pylorus is left intact (compared to BPB without a duodenal switch) A gastric pouch is created and part of the small intestine is also bypassed Used only in patients with ‘superobesity’ (BMI > 50 kg/m²) due to high rates of complications.
Laparoscopic adjustable gastric banding (e.g., Lap-Band® system)⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Least invasive of purely restrictive bariatric surgery procedures Limits food intake by placing an adjustable constricting ring completely around the top end of the stomach. Reversible
Biliopancreatic bypass (BPB) without duodenal switch (i.e., Scopinaro procedure)⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A different part of the stomach (from BPB with a duodenal switch), including the pylorus, is removed. The remaining part of the stomach is connected to the lower portion of the small intestine.
Vertical banded gastroplasty⁶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restrictive gastric operation that decreases food intake. The upper stomach near the esophagus is stapled vertically to create a small pouch along the inner

MEDICAL POLICY	Bariatric Surgery (All Lines of Business Except Medicare)
-----------------------	--

	<p>curve of the stomach. This causes the feeling of fullness sooner.</p>
Rechargeable vagal blocking system (e.g., Maestro)⁷	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pacemaker-type device that is designed to intermittently deliver electrical pulses to the vagus nerve in order to transiently block vagal nerve signals between the stomach and brain, thereby reducing appetite and, consequently, weight.
Intragastric balloon (IGB)⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balloons are inserted into the stomach via an endoscope and inflated with air or filled with saline. • The balloons occupy space in the stomach creating a sense of fullness with the goal of decreasing the amount of food ingested.
Single-anastomosis duodenal switch⁸	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of the stomach is permanently removed. • The small intestine is transected at one point and roughly half of the upper small intestine is bypassed.
BAROnova transpyloric shuttle⁹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An endoscopically implanted device intended to temporarily reduce stomach volume, increase feelings of fullness, and delay gastric emptying.
Gastric electrical stimulation (GES)¹⁰	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The exact mechanism of GES remains largely unknown. • GES is thought to impair physiological gastric electrical activity, inducing gastric distension, gastric accommodation reduction, and stomach peristalsis inhibition, leading to delayed gastric emptying and increased satiety.
Endoscopic duodenal-jejunal bypass liner¹¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An implanted thin, flexible tube that creates a physical barrier between ingested food and the duodenum/proximal jejunum. • This prevents the interaction of food enzymes and hormones in the proximal intestine.
Transoral gastroplasty (e.g., TOGA[®] system)¹²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stomach is stapled endoscopically to create a small pouch. • When food enters the stomach it enters this small pouch allowing the feeling of fullness faster
Mini-gastric bypass¹³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrictive and malabsorptive • Stomach is divided with a laparoscopic stapler • Most of the stomach is detached from the esophagus • 2 to 7 feet of intestines are bypassed

Repeat or Revision of Bariatric Surgery

MEDICAL POLICY	Bariatric Surgery (All Lines of Business Except Medicare)
-----------------------	--

According to UpToDate®, “The number of bariatric surgical operations performed in the United States has been relatively stable for the last five years. It is estimated that 179,000 weight-loss surgeries were performed in 2013. Of those, 42 percent were sleeve gastrectomy, 34 percent were gastric bypass, 14 percent were gastric band, and 1 percent were biliopancreatic diversion with duodenal switch. The remaining 6 percent were revisional procedures.”¹⁴

Hayes outlined three main categories of revisional procedures as well as the most common types of revisional procedures:¹⁵

- “Conversion: A change from 1 type of procedure to a different type.
- Corrective: A procedure that attempts to remedy complications or incomplete treatment effects of a previous bariatric operation.
- Reversal: A procedure that restores the original anatomy.

The type of revisional bariatric surgery (RBS) procedure performed is determined by factors such as type of primary bariatric procedure (PBS), patient’s anatomy and medical history, indications for RBS, and surgeon’s experience.

Common Types of Revisional Bariatric Surgery

Key: AGB, adjustable gastric banding; BPD-DS, biliopancreatic diversion with duodenal switch; GERD, gastroesophageal reflux disease; PBS, primary bariatric surgery; RBS, revisional bariatric surgery; RYGB, Roux-en-Y gastric bypass; SG, sleeve gastrectomy; VBG, vertical banded gastroplasty; WL, weight loss

PBS	Indications for RBS	RBS Options
Loop gastric bypass	Weight regain; marginal ulcerations; stricture of gastrojejunal stoma; poor gastric pouch emptying; bile reflux	Conversion to RYGB
RYGB	Weight regain; WL failure and/or recurrence of obesity-related comorbidities	AGB placement Conversion of proximal RYGB to distal RYGB (by increasing length of Roux or biliopancreatic limb) Conversion to BPD-DS
VBG	Weight regain secondary to maladaptive eating; weight regain due to staple line breakdown w/o severe GERD and esophagitis	VBG band removal w/out gastrogastrostomy Conversion to RYGB Revision of VBG
AGB	Inadequate WL due to technical problems w/ band, esophageal motility issues, GERD, or psychological band intolerance	AGB removal AGB replacement Conversion to SG Conversion to RYGB Conversion to BPD-DS

MEDICAL POLICY	Bariatric Surgery (All Lines of Business Except Medicare)
-----------------------	--

BPD-DS	Complications (e.g., micronutrient and macronutrient deficiency w/ malnutrition), weight regain, WL failure	Revision of SG Modification of common channel
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This report focuses on studies of conversion and corrective RBS procedures without consideration of stand-alone reversal operations.”¹⁵

In 2017, UpToDate® published a review of late complications of bariatric surgery which detailed a variety of complications related to specific procedures:¹⁴

“Complications following surgical treatment of severe obesity vary based upon the procedure performed and can be as high as 40 percent. Due to the high surgical volume, improving the safety of these operations has become a high priority, leading to the development of strict criteria for center accreditation, guidelines for safe and effective bariatric surgery, and careful monitoring of surgical outcomes.”

Complications of Specific Bariatric Procedures

Roux-en-Y Gastric Bypass (RYGB)

Complications related to RYGB may include, gastric remnant distension, stomal stenosis, marginal ulcers, cholelithiasis, ventral incisional hernia, internal hernias, short bowel syndrome, dumping syndrome, metabolic and nutritional derangements, nephrolithiasis and renal failure, postoperative hypoglycemia, change in bowel habits, and failure to lose weight and weight regain.¹⁴

Gastric Banding (GB)

Early complications of gastric banding may include acute stomal obstruction, band infection, gastric perforation, hemorrhage, bronchopneumonia, and delayed gastric emptying and pulmonary embolism. Late complications of this procedure include band erosion, band slippage or prolapse, port or tubing malfunction, leakage at the port site tubing or band, pouch or esophageal dilatation and esophagitis.¹⁴ According to UpToDate®, “(a)most 50 percent of patients will need surgical revision or removal of the band. Failed bands (due either to complications or inadequate weight loss) can generally be converted to other bariatric procedures such as RYGB or a duodenal switch.”¹⁴

Sleeve Gastrectomy (SG)

Complications related to sleeve gastrectomy may include bleeding, stenosis, gastric leaks and reflux.¹⁴

Vertical Banded Gastroplasty (VGB)

Complications related to vertical banded gastroplasty may include staple line disruption, obstruction, erosion of mesh band, reflux, and vomiting.¹⁴

MEDICAL POLICY	Bariatric Surgery (All Lines of Business Except Medicare)
-----------------------	--

REVIEW OF EVIDENCE

A review of the ECRI, Hayes, Cochrane, and PubMed databases was conducted regarding the use of bariatric surgery as a treatment of morbid obesity in adults and adolescents. Below is a summary of the available evidence identified through December 2019.

Medically Necessary Bariatric Surgery Procedures for the Treatment of Morbid Obesity

In 2014, Colquitt et al. conducted a Cochrane systematic review to assess the effects of bariatric surgery for obesity in adults, including the control of comorbidities.⁵ Independent reviewers identified relevant evidence, extracted data, and assessed quality. Outcomes of interest included mean BMI, weight loss, and resolution of comorbidities. The authors identified 22 randomized controlled trials (RCT) encompassing 1,798 patients. These studies evaluated Roux-en-Y gastric bypass (RYGB), sleeve gastrectomy (SG), adjustable gastric banding (AGB), and biliopancreatic bypass with duodenal switch (BDDS).

Key Results

- Of the 7 studies comparing surgery with non-surgical interventions, the results indicated people who had surgery achieved greater weight loss, improvement in comorbidities, and improvement in quality of life at one to two years compared to people who had non-surgical interventions. Serious adverse events (SAEs) ranged from 0% to 37% in the surgery groups and 0% to 25% in the no surgery groups.
- Three studies found that RYGB achieved greater weight loss up to 5 years after surgery compared to AGB. The mean difference (MD) was -5.2 kg/m² (95% confidence interval (CI) -6.4 to -4.0; P < 0.00001; 265 participants; 3 trials; moderate quality evidence). RYGB resulted in greater hospitalization duration and late major complications; however, AGB required high rates of reoperation for removal of the band.
- A total of 7 studies compared RYGB with SG, and found no major difference for weight loss. The mean difference was -0.2 kg/m² (95% CI -1.8 to 1.3); 353 participants; 6 trials; low quality evidence). No statistically significant differences were found for quality of life. "Effects on comorbidities, complications and additional surgical procedures were neutral, except gastro-oesophageal reflux disease improved following LRYGB (one RCT)."⁵
- The results of studies comparing BDDS to RYGB indicated greater weight loss in the BDDS group in super morbidly obese patients at 2 to 4 years follow-up. "End-of-study mean BMI loss was greater following BDDS: MD -7.3 kg/m² (95% CI -9.3 to -5.4); P < 0.00001; 107 participants; 2 trials; moderate quality evidence)."⁵ Quality of life was similar between groups. Additionally, one study showed that 82-100% of participants with diabetes had an HbA1C level of less than 5% at 3 years after surgery. One death occurred and more reoperations were reported in the BDDS group.
- One RCT found that BMI was reduced by 10 units more in the SG group compared to AGB at 3 years follow-up. Reoperations occurred in 10% of SG patients and 20% of AGB patients.

This Cochrane systematic review was of very good quality and had several strengths, including:

MEDICAL POLICY	Bariatric Surgery (All Lines of Business Except Medicare)
-----------------------	--

1. the systematic gathering of evidence, assessment of quality, and extraction of data by several independent reviewers following a pre-defined protocol
2. contacting authors of selected studies for additional information or data
3. assessment of heterogeneity, reporting bias, and publication bias
4. sensitivity analyses to evaluate the influence of studies with a high risk of bias or high losses to follow-up

Limitations of this systematic review were the inclusion of studies with lower quality evidence and the inability to conduct meta-analyses due to inter-study heterogeneity. The authors offered the following conclusions:

- Outcomes were similar between Roux-en-Y gastric bypass and sleeve gastrectomy, and both of these procedures had better outcomes than adjustable gastric banding.
 - For people with very high BMI, biliopancreatic diversion with duodenal switch resulted in greater weight loss than Roux-en-Y gastric bypass.
 - Overall, surgery results in greater improvement in weight loss outcomes and obesity-associated comorbidities compared to non-surgical interventions, regardless of the type of bariatric surgery used.
- In 2018, Clapp and colleagues conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis assessing long-term outcomes of the sleeve gastrectomy.¹⁶ Independent investigators systematically searched the literature through April 2017, identified eligible studies, assessed study quality, extracted data and pooled results with a random effects model. In total, 9 cohort studies evaluating outcomes among 2,280 patients were included for review. At 7-year follow-up, only 652 patients remained, as authors included studies had follow-up periods ranging from 2 to 11 years. Authors calculated weight recidivism rate among these patients to be 27.8% ($I^2 = .60\%$; 95% CI: 22.8%-32.7%). Investigators estimated the overall revision rate to be 19.9% ($I^2 = 93.8\%$; 95% CI: 11.3%-28.5%), with approximately 13.1% due to weight regain (5 studies) and 2.9% due to gastroesophageal reflux disease (5 studies). Limitations include the lack of a standard definition of “recidivism,” incomplete search terms, and lack of information in studies regarding the resolution of patients’ comorbidities. Investigators called for additional studies to better establish the long-term outcomes of sleeve gastrectomy.

Bariatric Surgery in Children and Adolescents

- In 2019, Hayes conducted an evidence review to evaluate bariatric surgeries for treatment of obesity in adolescents.¹⁷ Searching the literature through April 2018, the review identified 15 studies (1 randomized controlled trial, 3 nonrandomized prospective comparative cohort studies, 6 retrospective comparative cohort studies, 3 comparative analyses of registry data, and 2 noncomparative cohort studies) encompassing 50 to 890 adolescent patients with severe obesity. Follow-up varied from 1 to 8 years, and outcome measures included excess weight loss (EWL), BMI, changes in comorbidities, quality of

MEDICAL POLICY	Bariatric Surgery (All Lines of Business Except Medicare)
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life, and complications.

The available evidence “supports the use of bariatric surgery for the treatment of some adolescents with severe obesity to induce weight loss, reduce BMI, and improve obesity-related outcomes.”¹⁷ However, bariatric surgery in adolescents is associated with risk of complications and nutritional deficiencies. Additionally, the overall quality of evidence was determined to be low due to individual study quality and a lack of comparative data for different types of bariatric procedures.

The Hayes review stated, “(t)he evidence for bariatric surgery in adolescents with severe obesity is limited by the lack of large, well-designed clinical trials that provide data on long-term efficacy and safety of these surgeries.”¹⁷ Therefore, the following Hayes ratings were given:

- C (potential but unproven benefit): For use of vertical sleeve gastrectomy (VSG) in adolescents with severe obesity who have failed to respond to nonsurgical weight loss interventions.
 - C (potential but unproven benefit): For use of Roux-en-Y gastric bypass (RYGB) in adolescents with severe obesity who have failed to respond to nonsurgical weight loss interventions.
 - D1 (insufficient evidence): For use of adjustable gastric band (AGB) in adolescents with severe obesity who have failed to respond to nonsurgical weight loss interventions.
- In 2019, Ruiz-Costa conducted a systematic review to evaluate the long-term outcomes of metabolic and bariatric surgery in adolescents with severe obesity with a follow-up of at least 5 years.¹⁸ Searching the literature through July 2018, investigators identified eligible studies, assessed study quality and extracted data. In total, 10 studies with follow-up of at least 5 years were included for review. Surgeries performed included gastric bypass, gastric band, and sleeve gastrectomy. Mean BMI at follow-up was 32.4kg/m², down from 47 at baseline. Most studies reported weight regain within 1 to 12 years of follow-up. Remission rate of co-morbidities was 75% for dyslipidemia, 78% for musculoskeletal problems, 85% for hypertension, and 85% for type 2 diabetes. Complications were inadequately reported, yet high prevalence of iron deficiency and anemia were found. On the basis of low- to moderate-quality evidence, authors concluded that metabolic and bariatric surgery result in substantial reduction in BMI but low evidence that related co-morbidities resolve. Authors called for additional, adequately powered studies with long-term follow-up were needed to further validate results reported to date.
 - In 2017, Shoar and colleagues conducted a systematic review to evaluate the long-term outcomes of bariatric surgery in morbidly obese adolescents.¹⁹ Independent reviewers systematically identified the longest available studies, extracted data, and analyzed quality and bias. The outcomes of interest include weight loss and comorbidity resolution. A total of 14 studies reporting the results of bariatric surgery after 3 years in 950 morbidly obese adolescents were included.

The most commonly performed procedures were Roux-en-Y gastric bypass (RYGBP)(n=453) and adjustable gastric banding (n=265). Of the 950 patients at study initiation, only 677 were available at the latest follow-up. “On average, patients lost 13.3 kg/m² of their BMI. Among comorbidities, only

MEDICAL POLICY	Bariatric Surgery (All Lines of Business Except Medicare)
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diabetes mellitus resolved or improved dramatically.”¹⁹ A total of 108 patients were readmitted to the hospital, and 91 of these led to reoperation. The majority of these reoperations were primarily due to removal, exchange, or conversion of a band. Three deaths were reported. There was no long-term data available on nutritional deficiency or growth status of adolescents who underwent bariatric surgery.

Strengths of this study include the systematic review of evidence following a predefined protocol by several independent reviewers and the inclusion of a large number of encompassing a large sample size. However, methodological limitations are present in the poor quality of the selected studies and significant inter-study heterogeneity. Ultimately, the authors concluded “(a)lthough bariatric surgery is a safe and effective procedure in the treatment of adolescent morbid obesity, long-term data is scarce regarding its nutritional and developmental complication in this growing population of patients.”¹⁹

- In 2017, Pedroso et al. conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis to evaluate weight loss after bariatric surgery in obese adolescents.²⁰ Independent reviewers identified relevant literature, extracted data, and assessed quality of studies assessing weight loss after gastric band, gastric sleeve, and gastric bypass in obese adolescents. Outcomes of interest included absolute change in body mass index (BMI, kg/m²) and percent excess weight loss at 6, 12, 24, and 36 months post-operative. A total of 24 studies evaluating gastric band, gastric sleeve, and gastric bypass in 1,928 patients (gastric band: 1010, gastric sleeve: 139, gastric bypass: 779) were identified.

The average pre-operative BMI was 45.5 for gastric band, 48.8 for gastric sleeve, and 53.3 for gastric bypass. “The short-term weight loss, measured as mean (95%CI) absolute change in BMI (kg/m²) at 6 months, was -5.4 (-3.0, -7.8) after gastric band, -11.5 (-8.8, -14.2) after gastric sleeve, and -18.8 (-10.9, -26.6) after gastric bypass.”²⁰ Weight loss at 36 months (measured as the mean change in BMI) was -10.3 after gastric band, -13.0 after gastric sleeve, and -15.0 after gastric bypass. The authors did not report any analyses of reoperation or complication rates.

Strengths of this systematic review include the identification of relevant evidence by independent authors following a predefined protocol and the inclusion of a large number of studies encompassing a large patient population. However, methodological limitations are present in the poor quality of included studies and the short follow-up periods of these studies. Additionally, the authors did not report any data on reoperation or complication rates. The authors concluded, “(b)ariatric surgery in obese adolescent patients is effective in achieving short-term and sustained weight loss at 36 months; however, long-term data remains necessary to better understand its long-term efficacy.”²⁰

- In 2015, the Washington State Health Care Authority conducted a health technology assessment to evaluate bariatric surgery.²¹ This tech assessment included a systematic evaluation of the published, peer-reviewed medical literature describing bariatric surgery in a pediatric population. The authors identified 17 studies encompassing 553 pediatric patients as eligible for inclusion. Studies evaluated laparoscopic adjustable gastric band (8), Roux-en-Y gastric bypass (RYGBP)(6), vertical banded gastroplasty (VGB)(2), and banded bypass (1).

MEDICAL POLICY	Bariatric Surgery (All Lines of Business Except Medicare)
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The results of the tech assessment indicated the following:

- There was weak evidence to show that LAGB in morbidly obese pediatric patients leads to sustained weight loss at the longest follow-up (1.7 to 3.3 years) compared to non-operative approaches.
 - The LAGB studies reported no deaths; however, band slippage was commonly reported and reoperations were performed in 7.9% of patients.
- There was weak evidence to show that RYGBP in morbidly obese pediatric patients leads to sustained weight loss at the longest follow-up (1 to 6.3 years) compared to non-operative approaches.
 - The RYGBP studies reported one postoperative death. The most commonly reported complication was malnutrition and micronutrient deficiency. Additionally, life threatening complications (e.g., shock, pulmonary embolism) were also reported.
- There was insufficient evidence to permit conclusions about weight loss after other bariatric surgery procedures in pediatric patients.
- There was weak evidence to show that LAGB and RYGBP resolves comorbid conditions related to obesity compared to non-operative conditions.
- The evidence was insufficient to permit conclusions regarding potential impacts of bariatric surgery on the growth and development of pediatric patients.

Strengths of this technology assessment involve the systematic review of evidence by several independent authors. Limitations are present in the paucity of studies evaluating bariatric surgery in adolescents and the poor quality of available studies (e.g., only one included study was prospective). The technology assessment concluded that “(t)here is a lack of both short- and long-term data demonstrating effectiveness for any bariatric surgery procedure in both children and adolescents.”²¹

Non-Covered Bariatric Surgery Procedures

Adjustable Gastric Banding (i.e., Lap-Band® system)

In 2017, Vinzens et al. evaluated the long-term outcomes of laparoscopic adjustable gastric banding.²² A total of 405 patients from a Swiss bariatric surgery center were followed up with for up to 18 years. A total of 216 patients (63%) required revisional surgery, and 27 patients (8%) refused revisional surgery after band removal. Of the 100 patients (29%) that still had a band in place, the failure rate was 25% according to the Bariatric Analysis and Reporting Outcome System (BAROS). Additionally, the authors argue that LAGB is not completely reversible as 23% of patients who had the band removed still experienced symptoms. The authors concluded that, “(m)ore than 10 years after LAGB, 71% of patients lost their bands and only 15% of the 343 followed patients with the band in place have a good to excellent result, according to BAROS.”²²

In 2018, Khoraki et al. evaluated the long-term outcomes of laparoscopic adjustable gastric banding (LAGB).²³ A total of 208 patients who underwent LAGB between 2005 and 2012 were enrolled and followed-up with for up to 10 years. LAGB failure occurred in 118 (57%) of patients and 48 patients

MEDICAL POLICY	Bariatric Surgery (All Lines of Business Except Medicare)
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(23%) required a reoperation. The authors concluded that “LAGB was associated with poor short and long-term weight loss outcomes and a high failure rate. With the increased safety profile and greater efficacy of other surgical techniques, LAGB utilization should be discouraged.”²³

Biliopancreatic Bypass (i.e., the Scopinaro procedure)

The Scopinaro procedure has been largely abandoned due to life-threatening complications, nutritional deficiencies, and malnourishment.²⁴⁻²⁷ This procedure has been replaced with a modified procedure known as biliopancreatic bypass with a duodenal switch (BPDDS), which has shown increased weight loss, decreased revision rates, fewer side effects, and improved nutrient absorption at 10 year follow-up compared to the Scopinaro procedure.²⁸ Therefore, biliopancreatic bypass without a duodenal switch (i.e., the Scopinaro procedure) is considered not medically necessary.

Vertical Banded Gastroplasty

Vertical banded gastroplasty (i.e., stomach stapling) has also been largely abandoned due to insufficient weight loss, increased complications, and high reoperations rates.⁵ Additionally, a 2014 systematic review by Hsieh et al. evaluated the 10-year outcomes of vertical banded gastroplasty and concluded there was a “lack of strong evidence to support favorable long-term outcomes following vertical transected gastric bypass for obesity.”²⁹ Therefore, this procedure is considered not medically necessary.

Rechargeable Vagal Blocking System (e.g., Maestro)

In 2018, Hayes conducted an evidence review to evaluate the Maestro Rechargeable System (EnteroMedics, Inc.) for vagal blocking and obesity control.⁷ The review concluded the following rating:

- **D2 (insufficient evidence)** – For use of the Maestro device for weight loss in obese adults. This Rating reflects a sparse and low-quality body of evidence that is insufficient to determine the relative safety and efficacy of the technology.

Intragastric Balloon (IGB)

In 2019, Hayes conducted an evidence review to evaluate intragastric balloons for the treatment of obesity.⁴ The review concluded the following ratings:

- **D2 (insufficient evidence)** – For use of intragastric balloons (IGBs), as an adjunct to lifestyle interventions (i.e., diet and exercise), for treatment of obesity in patients unable to lose sufficient weight by conservative means.
- **D2 (insufficient evidence)** — For use of gas-filled IGBs versus saline-filled IGBs, as an adjunct to lifestyle interventions (i.e., diet and exercise), for treatment of obesity in patients unable to lose sufficient weight by conservative means.
- **D2 (insufficient evidence)** — For use of IGBs versus hyaluronic acid (HA) injections for treatment of obesity in patients unable to lose sufficient weight by conservative means.

MEDICAL POLICY	Bariatric Surgery (All Lines of Business Except Medicare)
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Single-Anastomosis Duodenal Switch (SAD-S)

In 2019, Hayes conducted a review of single anastomosis duodenal switch for weight loss.⁸ The review concluded insufficient published evidence to evaluate SAD-S for weight loss. Additionally, the available evidence presented conflicting findings regarding SAD-S for weight loss.

Gastric Electrical Stimulation (GES)

See the PHP Medical Policy: Gastric Electrical Stimulation, SUR227 for the evidence review evaluating GES for obesity.

Endoscopic Duodenal-jejunal Bypass Liner (e.g., EndoBarrier™ Gastrointestinal Liner), TransPyloric Shuttle (TPS), Transoral Gastroplasty (e.g., TOGA® System)

The endoscopic duodenal-jejunal bypass liner (EndoBarrier™), TransPyloric Shuttle, and Transoral Gastroplasty (TOGA® System) have not received FDA approval; therefore, these bariatric surgery procedures are considered investigational.

Mini-Gastric Bypass

Systematic Reviews

- In 2019, Hayes conducted a review of reviews evaluating the efficacy of mini gastric bypass-one anastomosis gastric bypass (MGB) as an alternative to either Roux-en-Y gastric bypass (RYGB) or laparoscopic sleeve gastrectomy (LSG) for the treatment of morbid obesity in adults.³⁰ For comparison with RYGB, Hayes evaluated a systematic review (n=3101) and 2 subsequently published RCTs (n= 253 and 400). For comparison with LSG, one systematic review (n= 2221) and 2 subsequently published RCTs (n=201 and 400) were included for review. One RCT compared MGB-OAGB with both RYGB and LSG. Outcomes of interest included weight loss, comorbidity resolution and complications. Follow-up was assessed at 5-years.

Compared to RYGB, MGB patients reportedly experienced less weight loss, although results were mixed. In studies evaluated by the systematic review (n=3101), approximately 8% to 9% mean greater excess weight loss with MGB at 1 year, 2 years, and 5 years of follow-up. A subsequently published RCT reported an approximately 20% greater mean percentage of excess BMI loss with MGB than with RYGB at 1 year, 2 years, and 5 years of follow-up. A second RCT reported similar weight loss outcomes between MGB and RYGB patients. Studies suggested that MGB patients experienced a higher incidence of malnutrition with MGB but lower incidence of internal hernia and bowel obstruction relative to RYGB patients. There were no reported differences in mortality between the two groups. Compared to LSG, MGB patients reportedly experienced greater weight loss at one-year follow-up across the 3 included studies. Fewer studies address longer follow-up durations (2 years or longer), and studies published to date have not suggested sustained benefits at longer follow-up.

MEDICAL POLICY	Bariatric Surgery (All Lines of Business Except Medicare)
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Hayes assessed the overall quality of evidence for MGB as “low.” Limitations included the small number of comparative studies available for review, lack of studies with long-term follow-up, preponderance of nonrandomized studies included in the two systematic reviews and inconsistent findings across both comparator groups. Investigators ultimately awarded “C” ratings (potential but unproven benefit) for the use of MGB as an alternative to RYGB and LSG. Investigators called for additional studies with long-term follow-up to establish patient selection criteria and the validity of results published to date.

- Since Hayes conducted its literature search on January 1, 2017, three systematic reviews were published evaluative outcomes for patients undergoing MGB.³¹⁻³³ Each study reported that MGB patients experienced a high percentage of excess weight loss at follow-up (e.g. 77% at 60 months in a non-comparative study).³³ One study found no improvement in weight loss compared to LSG patients at 2-year follow-up, but significantly greater weight loss at 5-year follow-up.³¹ Rates of resolution of Type 2 diabetes and obstructive sleep apnea were also higher compared to LSG patients.³¹

Randomized Controlled Trials

One randomized controlled trial (Lee et al., 2005) not included in the Hayes review above evaluated the effectiveness of laparoscopic mini-gastric bypass (LMGBP) versus traditional Roux-en-Y gastric bypass (RYGBP).³⁴ This RCT evaluated 80 patients undergoing LMGBP (n=40) or RYGBP (n=40). Although this study showed the LMGBP procedure to be as effective as RYGBP, the follow-up period was too short (2 years) and the sample size too small to adequately evaluate the long-term efficacy of LMGBP compared to RYGBP. Since this RCT, no additional RCTs have been published.

Nonrandomized Studies

Additional nonrandomized studies assessing mini-gastric bypass were identified.³⁵⁻⁴⁰ The poor methodological quality of these studies (e.g., lack of randomized design, lack of control group, small sample size, short follow-up period) does not permit meaningful conclusions regarding the safety and efficacy of mini-gastric bypass for the treatment of obesity. Additional high-quality studies are required to adequately evaluate this bariatric surgery procedure.

Parietal Cell Separating Gastrojejunostomy or Roux-en-Y Gastrojejunostomy

There is insufficient published evidence to determine the medical necessity of parietal cell separating gastrojejunostomy for the treatment of obesity and/or gastroesophageal reflux disease. Studies of good methodological quality (e.g., long-term randomized controlled trials) comparing this treatment to other gold standard therapies are required.

Endoscopic Procedures as the Primary Bariatric Procedure

MEDICAL POLICY	Bariatric Surgery (All Lines of Business Except Medicare)
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There is insufficient published evidence to adequately evaluate the efficacy and safety of endoscopic bariatric surgery procedures. Studies of good methodological quality comparing endoscopic procedures to gold standard therapies (e.g., Roux-en-Y gastric bypass) are required to establish the medical necessity of these procedures.

Repeat or Revision of Bariatric Surgery

In 2018 (archived 2019), Hayes published a systematic review of evidence evaluating the safety and efficacy of revisional bariatric surgery (RBS) due to complication or a lack of weight reduction after primary bariatric surgery.¹⁵ The review included 22 peer-reviewed, mostly retrospective comparative studies and 1 randomized controlled trial comparing RBS to sham procedure. Revisional procedures included in the review varied and 16 studies compared revision versus primary bariatric procedures. Only 2 included studies evaluated outcomes of revisional procedures following primary bariatric surgery. The Hayes report concluded there was potential but unproven benefit for RBS to treat weight loss failure following primary bariatric surgery in patients with severe obesity (defined as body mass index [BMI] ≥ 35 kilograms per square meter [kg/m^2] or a lower BMI with ≥ 1 severe weight-associated comorbidity) who are eligible to undergo additional weight loss surgery. (**Grade C** evidence based on low-quality studies regarding the efficacy of RBS as well as an increased risk of complications associated with RBS.) The Hayes report indicated there was insufficient evidence (**D2 rating**) for RBS to treat relapse of complications. Results from three included studies did not provide evidence to determine whether one type of revisional procedure resulted in better outcomes over another.

Bariatric Surgery in Patients with Type 1 Diabetes

Several recent systematic reviews have evaluated the safety and efficacy of bariatric surgery in adult obese patients with Type 1 Diabetes.⁴¹⁻⁴³ While reports indicated that bariatric surgery leads to significant weight loss in severely obese patients with T1D and significant improvements in insulin requirements and glycemic status, all investigators called for larger, long-term studies to verify findings.

CLINICAL PRACTICE GUIDELINES

Bariatric Surgery

American Heart Association/American College of Cardiology/The Obesity Society (AHA/ACC/TOS)

The 2013 AHA/ACC/TOS evidence-based guideline for the management of overweight and obesity in adults gave the following recommendations regarding the selection of patients for bariatric surgical treatment for obesity:

“Advise adults with a BMI $\geq 40 \text{ kg}/\text{m}^2$ or BMI $\geq 35 \text{ kg}/\text{m}^2$ with obesity-related comorbid conditions who are motivated to lose weight and who have not responded to behavioral treatment with or without pharmacotherapy with sufficient weight loss to achieve targeted health outcome goals that bariatric surgery may be an appropriate option to improve health and offer referral to an

MEDICAL POLICY	Bariatric Surgery (All Lines of Business Except Medicare)
-----------------------	--

experienced bariatric surgeon for consultation and evaluation. NHLBI Grade: A (Strong); ACC/AHA COR: IIa; ACC/AHA LOE: A

For individuals with a BMI <35 kg/m², there is insufficient evidence to recommend for or against undergoing bariatric surgical procedures. NHLBI Grade: N (No Recommendation)

Advise patients that choice of a specific bariatric surgical procedure may be affected by patient factors, including age, severity of obesity/BMI, obesity-related comorbid conditions, other operative risk factors, risk of short- and long-term complications, behavioral and psychosocial factors, and patient tolerance for risk, as well as provider factors (surgeon and facility). NHLBI Grade: E (Expert Opinion); ACC/AHA COR: IIb; ACC/AHA LOE: C⁴⁴

Department of Veterans Affairs/Department of Defense (VA/DoD)

The 2006 (updated 2014) VA/DoD evidence-based clinical practice guideline for the screening and management of overweight and obesity gave the following recommendations regarding bariatric surgery:

- “Offer bariatric surgery, as an adjunct to comprehensive lifestyle intervention, for weight loss in adult patients with a BMI >40 kg/m² or those with BMI 35.0-39.9 kg/m² with one or more obesity-associated conditions. [A]
- Offer bariatric surgery, as an adjunct to comprehensive lifestyle intervention, to improve some obesity-associated conditions in adult patients with BMI ≥35.0 kg/m². [A]
- Current evidence is insufficient to assess the balance of benefits and harms of offering bariatric surgery as an adjunct to comprehensive lifestyle intervention, for weight loss or to improve some obesity-associated conditions, to patients over age 65 or with a BMI<35 kg/m². [I]
- Engage all patients who are candidates for bariatric surgery in a general discussion of the benefits and potential risks. If more detailed information is requested by the patient to assist in the decision-making process, a consultation with a bariatric surgical team should occur. [EO]
- Provide lifelong follow-up after bariatric surgery to monitor adverse effects and complications, dietary restrictions, adherence to weight management behaviors, and psychological health. [EO]⁴⁵

Health Evidence Review Commission (HERC)

The 2016 HERC coverage guidance on metabolic and bariatric surgery recommend the following:

“Coverage of metabolic and bariatric surgery (including Roux-en-Y gastric bypass, and sleeve gastrectomy) is recommended for:

- Adult obese patients (BMI ≥ 35) with
 - Type 2 diabetes (strong recommendation) OR
 - at least two of the following other serious obesity-related comorbidities: hypertension, coronary heart disease, mechanical arthropathy in major weight bearing joint, sleep apnea (weak recommendation)

MEDICAL POLICY	Bariatric Surgery (All Lines of Business Except Medicare)
-----------------------	--

- Adult obese patients (BMI \geq 40) (strong recommendation)

Metabolic and bariatric surgery is recommended for coverage in these populations only when provided in a facility accredited by the Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery Accreditation and Quality Improvement Program (weak recommendation).

Metabolic and bariatric surgery is not recommended for coverage in:

- Patients with BMI <35, or 35-40 without the defined comorbid conditions above (weak recommendation)
- Children and adolescents (weak recommendation)⁴⁶

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)

The 2014 evidence-based NICE guideline for the identification, assessment, and management of obesity gave the following recommendations for bariatric surgery:

- “Bariatric surgery is a treatment option for people with obesity if all of the following criteria are fulfilled:
 - o They have a BMI of 40 kg/m² or more, or between 35 kg/m² and 40 kg/m² and other significant disease (for example, type 2 diabetes or high blood pressure) that could be improved if they lost weight.
 - o All appropriate non-surgical measures have been tried but the person has not achieved or maintained adequate, clinically beneficial weight loss.
 - o The person is generally fit for anaesthesia and surgery.
 - o The person commits to the need for long-term follow-up.
- Bariatric surgery is the option of choice (instead of lifestyle interventions or drug treatment) for adults with a BMI of more than 50 kg/m² when other interventions have not been effective.
- Surgical intervention is not generally recommended in children or young people.
 - o Bariatric surgery may be considered for young people only in exceptional circumstances, and if they have achieved or nearly achieved physiological maturity.”⁴⁷

Bariatric Surgery in Type II Diabetes Patients with BMI 30-34.9 kg/m²

International Diabetes Organization

The 2016 joint statement by the International Diabetes Organizations evaluating metabolic surgery for type 2 diabetes (T2D) stated the following:

“Metabolic surgery should also be *considered* to be an option to treat T2D in patients with class I obesity (BMI 30.0-34.9 kg/m²) and inadequately controlled hyperglycemia despite optimal medical treatment by either oral or injectable medications (including insulin).”⁴⁸ However, the authors also state that the evidence indicates the benefits of bariatric surgery for T2D wanes over time and further randomized controlled trials are needed in patients with a BMI <35.

MEDICAL POLICY	Bariatric Surgery (All Lines of Business Except Medicare)
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American Diabetes Association (ADA)

The 2018 ADA “standards of medical care in diabetes” for obesity management in the treatment of type 2 diabetes, stated the following:

“Metabolic surgery should be considered as an option for adults with type 2 diabetes and BMI 30.0–34.9 kg/m² (27.5–32.4 kg/m² in Asian Americans) if hyperglycemia is inadequately controlled despite optimal medical control by either oral or injectable medications (including insulin). **B**”⁴⁹ A “B” recommendation is based on evidence from well conducted nonrandomized studies or meta-analysis of nonrandomized studies.

This recommendation is based on the International Diabetes Organization guideline described above.

American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists (AACE)

The 2016 AACE evidence-based clinical practice guideline for medical care of patients with obesity stated,

“ Patients with a BMI of $\geq 35\text{kg/m}^2$ and 1 or more severe obesity-related complications, including T2DM, hypertension, obstructive sleep apnea, obesity hypoventilation syndrome, Pickwickian syndrome, nonalcoholic fatty liver disease or non-alcoholic , nonalcoholic fatty liver disease or nonalcoholic steatohepatitis, pseudotumor cerebri, gastroesophageal reflux disease, asthma, venous stasis disease, severe urinary incontinence, debilitating arthritis, or considerably impaired QOL may also be considered for a bariatric surgery procedure.

Patients with BMI of 30 to 34.9 kg/m² with diabetes or metabolic syndrome may also be considered for a bariatric procedure, although current evidence is limited by the number of patients studied and lack of long-term data demonstrating net benefit...

...Independent of BMI criteria, there is insufficient evidence to recommend a bariatric surgical procedure specifically for glycemic control, lipid lowering, or CVD risk reduction alone.”⁵⁰

Bariatric Surgery for the Treatment of Non-Alcoholic Steatohepatitis

American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases (AASLD)

The 2018 AASLD practice *guidance* for the diagnosis and management of nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, stated foregut bariatric surgery can be considered in otherwise eligible obese individuals with NAFLD or NASH, but it is premature to consider foregut bariatric surgery as an established option to specifically treat NASH.⁵¹

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)

MEDICAL POLICY	Bariatric Surgery (All Lines of Business Except Medicare)
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A 2017 NICE quality and productivity study concluded “(b)ariatric surgery for non-alcoholic steatohepatitis in obese patients is not supported by sufficient good quality evidence. Consideration could be given to using it only within the context of a research or audit project. Reducing or stopping bariatric surgery for non-alcoholic steatohepatitis in obese patients is likely to improve quality of patient care and result in productivity savings by avoiding unnecessary operations.”⁵²

Bariatric Surgery for the Treatment of Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease

American College of Gastroenterology (ACG)

The 2013 ACG guidelines for the diagnosis and management of gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) gives a “conditional recommendation” based on a moderate level of evidence that obese patients contemplating surgical therapy for GERD should be considered for bariatric surgery.⁵³ The ACG gives a “conditional recommendation” when there is uncertainty that the desirable effects of an intervention clearly outweigh the undesirable effects.

Bariatric Surgery in Children and Adolescents

American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)

In 2019, the AAP released a policy statement made on the basis of a non-systematic review of evidence, addressing bariatric surgery for adolescents aged 13 to 18 years with severe obesity.⁵⁴ The AAP identified the following indications for adolescent metabolic and bariatric surgery:

- Youth with Class 2 obesity, BMI ≥ 35 or 120% of the 95th percentile for age and sex, whichever is lower, with clinically significant disease (including obstructive sleep apnea (AHI >5); type 2 diabetes mellitus; idiopathic intracranial hypertension; nonalcoholic steatohepatitis; slipped capital femoral epiphysis; Blount disease; gastroesophageal reflux disease; and hypertension.)
- Youth with Class 3 obesity BMI ≥ 40 , or 140% of the 95% percentile for age and sex, whichever is lower. While commonly present, comorbid conditions are not required.

The guideline noted that generally accepted contraindications include a medically correctable cause of obesity, intreated or poorly controlled substance abuse, concurrent or planned pregnancy, current eating disorder, or inability to adhere to postoperative recommendations and mandatory lifestyle changes.

Endocrine Society

In 2017, the Endocrine Society clinical practice guideline based on a non-systematic review of evidence regarding the assessment, treatment and prevention of pediatric obesity.⁵⁵ On the basis of evidence assessed as “very low quality” and “low quality,” authors listed the following indications for adolescent bariatric surgery:

MEDICAL POLICY	Bariatric Surgery (All Lines of Business Except Medicare)
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- The patient has attained Tanner 4 or 5 pubertal development and final or near-final adult height, the patient has a BMI of >40 kg/m² or has a BMI of >35 kg/m² and significant, extreme comorbidities
- Extreme obesity and comorbidities persist despite compliance with a formal program of lifestyle modification, with or without pharmacotherapy
- Psychological evaluation confirms the stability and competence of the family unit [psychological distress due to impaired quality of live (QOL) from obesity may be present, but the patient does not have an underlying untreated psychiatric illness]
- The patient demonstrates the ability to adhere to the principles of healthy dietary and activity habits
- There is access to an experienced surgeon in a pediatric bariatric surgery center of excellence that provides the necessary infrastructure for patient care, including a team capable of long-term follow-up of the metabolic and psychosocial needs of the patient and family.

Oregon Health Evidence Review Commission (HERC)

In 2016, the Oregon Health Evidence Review Commission published a coverage guidance addressing metabolic and bariatric surgery.⁵⁶ On the basis of findings from three “fair or good quality” systematic reviews, investigators recommended against metabolic and bariatric surgery for children and adolescents. Despite noting that bariatric surgery is associated with significant improvements in BMI and co-morbidities, authors called for additional, large studies with long-term follow-up to validate findings reported to date.

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)

In 2014, NICE published a guidance on obesity stating that while surgical intervention is generally not recommended for children and young people, bariatric surgery may be considered in young people in exceptional circumstances and if they have achieved or almost achieved physiological maturity.⁴⁷ Moreover, only a multidisciplinary team with pediatric expertise should perform the surgery.

Institute for Clinical Systems Improvement (ICSI)

In 2013, the ICSI published a guideline on prevention and management of obesity for children and adolescents. Authors issued the following selection criteria for adolescent bariatric surgery:⁵⁷

- BMI > 40 kilograms per square meter (kg/m²) or BMI > 35 kg/m² and significant, severe comorbidities (e.g., type 2 diabetes mellitus, obstructive sleep apnea, pseudotumor cerebri)
- Tanner 4 or 5 pubertal development achieved or bone age ≥ 13 years in girls or ≥ 15 years in boys
- At least 6 months organized attempts at weight management without success

MEDICAL POLICY	Bariatric Surgery (All Lines of Business Except Medicare)
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- Capacity to make decision and exhibit commitment to comprehensive medical and psychological evaluations before and following surgery
- A complete evaluation of the home environment by trained personnel is necessary to ensure a supportive family environment

American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS)

In 2012, the ASMBS pediatric committee published a best practice guideline and issued the following selection criteria for adolescents to be considered for a bariatric procedure.⁵⁸

- Body mass index (BMI) ≥ 35 with major comorbidities (i.e., type 2 diabetes mellitus, moderate-to-severe sleep apnea, pseudotumor cerebri, or severe nonalcoholic steatohepatitis) or
- BMI ≥ 40 with other comorbidities (e.g., hypertension, insulin resistance, glucose intolerance, substantially impaired quality of life [QOL] or activities of daily living, dyslipidemia, sleep apnea with apnea hypopnea index > 5)

Repeat or Revision of Bariatric Surgery

American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists, Obesity Society, American Society for Metabolic & Bariatric Surgery

In 2013, the American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists, Obesity Society, and American Society for Metabolic & Bariatric Surgery updated a co-sponsored guideline regarding perioperative support of bariatric surgery patients.⁵⁹ The group made the following recommendations regarding repeat or revision bariatric surgeries:

- “Patients who previously underwent a RYGB with a nonpartitioned stomach who develop a gastrogastic fistula or herniation with symptoms of weight regain, marginal ulcer, stricture or gastroesophageal reflux, may benefit from a revisional procedure (Grade C; BEL 3).
- Persistent vomiting, regurgitation, and UGI (upper gastrointestinal) obstruction after LAGB should be treated with immediate removal of fluid from the adjustable band (Grade D). Persistent symptoms of gastroesophageal reflux, regurgitation, chronic cough, or recurrent aspiration pneumonia after LAGB raise concern for the band being too tight or the development of an abnormally large gastric pouch above the band or esophageal dilation. These symptoms should prompt immediate referral to a bariatric surgeon (Grade D).
- Definitive repair of asymptomatic abdominal wall hernias can be deferred until weight loss has stabilized and nutritional status has improved, to allow for adequate healing (12 to 18 months after bariatric surgery) (Grade D). Symptomatic hernias that occur after bariatric surgery require prompt surgical evaluation (Grade C; BEL 3). Patients with sudden onset, severe cramping periumbilical pain or recurrent episodes of severe abdominal pain any time after weight loss surgery should be evaluated with an abdominal and pelvic CT scan to exclude the potentially life-threatening

MEDICAL POLICY	Bariatric Surgery (All Lines of Business Except Medicare)
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complication of a closed loop bowel obstruction (Grade D). Exploratory laparotomy or laparoscopy is indicated in patients who are suspected of having an internal hernia because this complication can be missed with UGI x-ray studies and CT scans (Grade C; BEL 3).”

These recommendations are based on limited evidence or consensus opinion.

POLICY SUMMARY

Roux-en-Y gastric bypass is the gold standard bariatric surgery procedure and is well established in peer-reviewed medical literature and clinical practice. The evidence supports the use of sleeve gastrectomy and indicates its efficacy is similar to that of Roux-en-Y. There is sufficient evidence to establish the efficacy of biliopancreatic bypass with a duodenal switch in super obese (> 50 kg/m²) patients. Several evidence-based clinical practice guidelines recommend the use of bariatric surgery in adults with a BMI greater than 40 kg/m² or 35 kg/m² with obesity-related comorbidities; however; these guidelines do not recommend which bariatric surgery procedure should be used.

Low-quality evidence also suggests that bariatric surgery is a safe and effective treatment for obesity in adolescents. At short- to intermediate term follow-up, bariatric surgery patients experienced significant weight loss and improvements in certain obesity-associated comorbidities (e.g. type 2 diabetes, dyslipidemia and hypertension) compared to non-surgical interventions. Additionally, guidelines from 5 clinical practice organizations endorse bariatric surgery for adolescents meeting near-uniform selection criteria. Due to barriers to conducting RCTs in this population, evidence quality is unlikely to improve in coming years.

Due to the decreased efficacy, high long-term revision rate, and the availability of other safe and efficacious bariatric surgery procedures adjustable gastric banding (i.e., Lap-Band system) is considered not medically necessary. Biliopancreatic bypass without a duodenal switch (i.e., the Scopinaro procedure) has been largely abandoned as a bariatric surgery procedure due to life-threatening complications, malabsorption, and severe nutritional deficiencies; therefore, it is considered not medically necessary. Additionally, vertical banded gastroplasty (i.e., stomach stapling) is also infrequently used due to life-threatening complications and the availability of other efficacious and safe bariatric surgery procedures; therefore, this procedure is considered not medically necessary.

There are several other bariatric surgery procedures and technologies that have been proposed as a treatment of morbid obesity (e.g., vagal nerve stimulation, intragastric balloons, mini-gastric bypass). Until evidence demonstrates the safety and superiority of these procedures over other established treatments, they are considered investigational.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

Company Medical Policies serve as guidance for the administration of plan benefits. Medical policies do not constitute medical advice nor a guarantee of coverage. Company Medical Policies are reviewed annually and are based upon published, peer-reviewed scientific evidence and evidence-based clinical

MEDICAL POLICY	Bariatric Surgery (All Lines of Business Except Medicare)
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practice guidelines that are available as of the last policy update. The Companies reserve the right to determine the application of Medical Policies and make revisions to Medical Policies at any time. Providers will be given at least 60-days' notice of policy changes that are restrictive in nature.

The scope and availability of all plan benefits are determined in accordance with the applicable coverage agreement. Any conflict or variance between the terms of the coverage agreement and Company Medical Policy will be resolved in favor of the coverage agreement.

REGULATORY STATUS

Mental Health Parity Statement

Coverage decisions are made on the basis of individualized determinations of medical necessity and the experimental or investigational character of the treatment in the individual case.

MEDICAL POLICY CROSS REFERENCES

- Bariatric Surgery (Medicare Only), SUR139
- Gastric Electrical Stimulation, SUR227

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MEDICAL POLICY	Bariatric Surgery (All Lines of Business Except Medicare)
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MEDICAL POLICY	Bariatric Surgery (All Lines of Business Except Medicare)
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