Clinical Review Criteria
Sex-Hormone Binding Globulin (SHBG)

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Criteria
For Medicare Members
Medicare covers the code as the test is often done for other reasons and this is a new indication not addressed in Medicare coverage documents.

For Non-Medicare Members
SHBG for Predicting Diabetes Risk
There is insufficient evidence in the published medical literature to show that this service/therapy is as safe as standard services/therapies and/or provides better long-term outcomes than current standard services/therapies.

SHBG is not covered for symptoms of erectile dysfunction, fatigue, impotence or low libido as the medical literature does not support its use in these circumstances.

Background
Causes of abnormal SHBG include the following:

- Increased SHBG concentrations: aging, hyperthyroidism, high estrogen concentrations, liver disease, HIV, anti-seizure drugs
- Decreased SHBG concentrations: moderate obesity, insulin resistance, type 2 diabetes, hypothyroidism, growth hormone excess, exogenous androgens/anabolic steroids, glucocorticoids, progestins, nephrotic syndrome
- Free testosterone — If serum free testosterone concentration is measured, the following points should be kept in mind:
  - Serum free testosterone should be performed by equilibrium dialysis and only in those few laboratories that specialize in endocrine testing.
  - The free testosterone concentration, as calculated from the total testosterone, SHBG, and albumin concentrations, may also be reliable, but there are many different equations for this calculation and they give vastly different results, some of which reflect the results obtained by equilibrium dialysis better than others. Consequently, it is essential that the result be compared with the normal range for the laboratory that performed the assay.
  - Free testosterone measured by an analog method, which is the assay most commonly offered by hospital and commercial laboratories, does not correlate with the results of equilibrium dialysis. This test gives misleading information and should never be ordered.
  - The problem with the analog method was illustrated in a study in which sera from patients who had a variety of SHBG concentrations were assayed by each of the above methods. The results using each of the assays correlated well with the results using each of the other methods, except for free testosterone by the analog method, in which the results were both systematically lower than in the other methods and varied as a function of SHBG.

The following information was used in the development of this document and is provided as background only. It is not to be used as coverage criteria. Please only refer to the criteria listed above for coverage determinations.
Sex hormone-binding globulin (SHBG) is a serum protein that binds to circulating androgens and estrogens, specifically testosterone and estradiol, with high affinity and serves as a transporter/reservoir. It is believed that SHBG regulates the access and action of these hormones. Initially it was thought that when bound to SHBG these sex hormones were biologically inactive. However, emerging evidence suggests that even sex hormones bound to SHBG may be biologically active. SHBG is produced mainly in the liver; however, other tissues including the placenta, testis, brain, and endometrium also produce SHBG. Age and obesity along with a variety of hormonal, nutritional, metabolic, and genetic factors have been found to influence the production of SHBG. Several conditions such as diabetes, polycystic ovarian syndrome, obesity, hypothyroidism, and hyper-insulinemia are associated with low levels of SHBG; however, causality has yet to be proven. Because of SHBG association with type 2 diabetes, there has been growing interest in the use of SHBG levels as a tool for the early identification of this disease (Brand 2010, Dahan 2006, Hoppé 2010, Xita 2010).

**Medical Technology Assessment Committee (MTAC)**

**Sex-Hormone Binding Globulin**

02/14/2011: MTAC REVIEW

**Evidence Conclusion:** Men: Two prospective cohort studies evaluated the association between SHBG levels and the risk of type 2 diabetes in men. The first study followed 1,454 men from the Troms study, a population-based prospective cohort study, who did not have diabetes at baseline for a mean of 9.1 years. Seventy-six men were diagnosed with diabetes (incidence rate of 5.8 per 1,000 person years). After controlling for age, HDL-cholesterol, systolic blood pressure, and waist circumference there was no association between SHBG and the risk of diabetes (Vikan 2010). The second study followed 1,128 men aged 40-70 years who participated in the Massachusetts Male Aging Study, a population-based prospective cohort study, for an average of 13 years. Ninety men were diagnosed with diabetes (incidence rate of 6.2 per 1,000 person years). Results from this analysis suggest that in men, even after controlling for age, BMI, high blood pressure, smoking, alcohol intake, and physical activity, SHBG levels were associated with the development of type 2 diabetes (Laksham 2010). It should be noted that the mean levels of SHBG were higher in the Vikan study compared to the Laksham study (52.7 nmol/l vs. 32.0 nmol/l). This may be due to the fact that blood sample were drawn at different times of the day. Diabetes status was determined through self-report in both studies. Additionally, neither study adjusted for insulin levels, which have been found to inhibit SHBG production. An earlier systematic review and meta-analysis of 3 prospective cohort studies found that men with higher SHBG levels (>28.3 vs. ≤28.3 nmol/l) had a 52% lower risk of type 2 diabetes (RR 0.48, 95%CI 0.33-0.69) (Ding 2006). Women: One prospective cohort study was identified that evaluated the association between SHBG levels and the risk of type 2 diabetes in postmenopausal women. In this study, 1,612 women were followed for a median of 4.7 years and 116 women were diagnosed with diabetes. Results from this study suggest that in postmenopausal women SHBG levels are associated with the development of type 2 diabetes even after adjusting for age, race/ethnicity, education, income, family history of diabetes, examination site, insulin resistance, and adiposity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHBG (nmol/l)</th>
<th>Model 1*</th>
<th>Model 2‡</th>
<th>Model 3§</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1 (8.9-37.8)</td>
<td>1.0 (Ref)</td>
<td>1.0 (Ref)</td>
<td>1.0 (Ref)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2 (38.0-51.4)</td>
<td>0.39 (0.25-0.61)</td>
<td>0.49 (0.31-0.76)</td>
<td>0.41 (0.24-0.69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3 (51.5-71.5)</td>
<td>0.29 (0.18-0.47)</td>
<td>0.44 (0.26-0.74)</td>
<td>0.53 (0.30-0.92)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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An earlier systematic review and meta-analysis of 2 prospective cohort studies found that women with higher SHBG levels (>60.0 vs. ≤60.0nmol/l) had an 80% lower risk of type 2 diabetes (RR 0.20, 95%CI 0.12-0.30) (Ding 2006). Conclusion: Several observational studies suggest that lower SHBG levels are associated with an increased risk of developing of type 2 diabetes; however, SHBG cutpoints for determining increased risk have not been established. Additionally, there is insufficient evidence to determine the clinical utility of using SHBG to predict type 2 diabetes.

**Articles:** The literature search revealed several case-control, cross-sectional, and prospective cohort studies that examined the association between SHBG and the risk of type 2 diabetes. Three recent prospective cohort studies were selected for review. No studies were identified that addressed the clinical utility of using SHBG to predict type 2 diabetes. The following studies were critically appraised: Kalyani RR, Franco M, Dobs AS, et al. The association of endogenous sex hormones, adiposity, and insulin resistance with incident diabetes in postmenopausal women. *J Clin Endocrinol Metab 2009; 94:4127-4135.* See [Evidence Table]. Lakshman KM, Bhaisin S, and Araujo AB. Sex hormone-binding globulin as an independent predictor of incident type 2 diabetes in men. *J Gerontol A Biol Sci Med Sci 2010; 65A: 503-509.* See [Evidence Table]. Vikan T, Schirmer H, Njølstad I, and Svartberg J. Low testosterone and sex hormone-binding globulin levels and high estradiol levels are independent predictors of type 2 diabetes in men. *Eur J Endocrinol 2010; 162:747-754.* See [Evidence Table].

The use of SHBG does not meet the Kaiser Permanente Medical Technology Assessment Criteria.

### Codes

**CPT:** 84270