



PROBLEM GAMBLING

Understanding Gambling

Some kinds of gambling involve some skill, like poker. Some gambling games are all chance, like slot machines. Whether the game involves some skill or not, people gamble because they hope to gain something of value. Gambling includes many things like buying a lottery or scratch ticket or playing Bingo or betting on the outcome of a sports event.

What causes it?

Exactly what causes someone to gamble compulsively isn't well understood. Like many problems, compulsive gambling may result from a combination of biological, genetic and environmental factors.

Although most people who play cards or wager never develop a gambling problem, certain factors are more often associated with compulsive gambling:

- Mental health issues. People who gamble compulsively often have substance misuse problems, personality disorders, depression or anxiety. Compulsive gambling may also be associated with bipolar disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) or attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).
- Age. Compulsive gambling is more common in younger and middle-aged people. Gambling during childhood or the teenage years increases the risk of developing compulsive gambling. But compulsive gambling in the older adult population can also be a problem.
- Sex. Compulsive gambling is more common in men than women. Women who gamble typically start later in life and may become addicted more quickly. But gambling patterns among men and women have become increasingly similar.
- Family or friend influence. If your family members or friends have a gambling problem, the chances are greater that you will, too.
- Medications used to treat Parkinson's disease and restless legs syndrome. Drugs called dopamine agonists have a rare side effect that may result in compulsive behaviors, including gambling, in some people.
- Certain personality characteristics. Being highly competitive, a workaholic, impulsive, restless or easily bored may increase your risk of compulsive gambling.

Signs & Symptoms

- Being preoccupied with gambling, such as constantly planning gambling activities and how to get more gambling money
- Needing to gamble with increasing amounts of money to get the same thrill
- Trying to control, cut back or stop gambling, without success
- Feeling restless or irritable when you try to cut down on gambling
- Gambling to escape problems or relieve feelings of helplessness, guilt, anxiety or depression
- Trying to get back lost money by gambling more (chasing losses)
- Lying to family members or others to hide the extent of your gambling
- Risking or losing important relationships, a job, or school or work opportunities because of gambling
- Asking others to bail you out of financial trouble because you gambled money away

Most casual gamblers stop when losing or set a limit on how much they're willing to lose. But people with a compulsive gambling problem are compelled to keep playing to recover their money — a pattern that becomes increasingly destructive over time. Some people may turn to theft or fraud to get gambling money.

Some people with a compulsive gambling problem may have periods of remission — a length of time where they gamble less or not at all. But without treatment, the remission usually isn't permanent.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT US



PROBLEM GAMBLING

How is it treated?

Treating compulsive gambling can be challenging. That's partly because most people have a hard time admitting they have a problem. Yet a major part of treatment is working on acknowledging that you're a compulsive gambler.

If your family or your employer pressured you into therapy, you may find yourself resisting treatment. But treating a gambling problem can help you regain a sense of control — and possibly help heal damaged relationships or finances.

Treatment for compulsive gambling may include these approaches:

- **Therapy.** Behavioral therapy or cognitive behavioral therapy may be helpful. Behavioral therapy uses a process of exposure to the behavior you want to unlearn and teaches you skills to reduce your urge to gamble. Cognitive behavioral therapy focuses on identifying unhealthy, irrational and negative beliefs and replacing them with healthy, positive ones. Family therapy also may be helpful.
- **Medications.** Antidepressants and mood stabilizers may help treat problems that often go along with compulsive gambling — such as bipolar disorder, depression or anxiety. Some antidepressants may be effective in reducing gambling behavior. Medications called narcotic antagonists, useful in treating substance misuse, may help treat compulsive gambling.
- **Self-help groups.** Some people find that talking with others who have a gambling problem may be a helpful part of treatment. Ask your health care provider or mental health provider for advice on self-help groups, such as Gamblers Anonymous and other resources.
- **Treatment for compulsive gambling** may involve an outpatient program, inpatient program or a residential treatment program, depending on your needs and resources. Self-help treatments such as structured internet-based programs and telephone visits with a mental health professional may be an option for some people.
- **Treatment for substance misuse, depression, anxiety or any other mental health issue** may be part of your treatment plan for compulsive gambling.

Even with treatment, you may return to gambling, especially if you spend time with people who gamble or you're in gambling settings. If you feel that you'll start gambling again, contact your mental health provider or sponsor right away to prevent a relapse.

Where to get help

If you or someone you know has a gambling problem, help is available. Contact the Problem Gambling Helpline at **800-522-4700**. Professionals are available 24 hours a day to take your call. Help is available at no-cost to the problem gambler and their concerned others.

You can also go to <http://www.ksgamblinghelp.com/> for more information and resources.

Additional resources:

<https://www.gamblersanonymous.org/ga/>

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT US

Iroquois Center for Human Development
(620) 723 - 2272