



Gambling Problems

For most people, gambling is a social event done responsibly. For as much as 4% of all adults, though, gambling can disrupt their lives. About 2 million (1%) of adults in the U.S. meet the criteria for **pathological gambling**. (See Signs & Symptoms at right.)

Another 4 to 8 million persons (2–3%) are **problem gamblers**. They are not pathological gamblers, but have problems due to gambling.

Treatment

Problem gambling is an illness. It needs professional treatment.

Signs & Symptoms

For Pathological Gambling

Pathological gamblers are addicted to gambling. They do 5 or more of these things:

- They are pre-occupied with gambling. They dwell on past gambling events, plan future gambling bouts, and/or think about ways to get money to gamble with.
- They need to increase the amount of money to gamble with to get a desired level of excitement.
- They have tried to control, limit, or stop gambling without success.
- They are restless or very cranky when they try to limit or stop gambling.
- They gamble to escape problems or to relieve negative feelings.
- They gamble to get even for past gambling losses.
- They lie to others to hide how much they are involved with gambling.
- They have stolen or done another illegal act to get money for gambling.
- They have lost a job, a relationship, etc., due to gambling.
- They rely on others to bail them out from money problems due to gambling.



Problem gambling disrupts a person's life.

Other Problems Pathological Gamblers Have

- They abuse alcohol or drugs.
- They sleep poorly.
- They are prone to stress-related conditions, such as high blood pressure, headaches, and mood disorders, such as depression.



Gambling Problems, Continued

- They have thoughts of suicide.
- They gamble constantly.
- They want to have wealth and material goods without working hard to get them.
- They think that money is both the cause of and solution to all of their problems.
- They feel important or “in control” and over-confident while betting.

Causes

Problem gambling occurs when gambling can't be controlled. It may follow years of social gambling, but then may be set into motion by a stressful event or greater exposure to gambling.

Problem gamblers report that one or both parents had a drinking and/or gambling problem.

Questions to Ask

Do you have one or more **signs & symptoms for pathological gambling** listed on previous page?

NO

Do you gamble only when your mood is abnormally and constantly elevated?

YES



See Self-Care / Prevention in next column

Self-Care / Prevention

Along with professional treatment:

- Learn all you can about gambling and its effects.
- Contact Gamblers Anonymous (GA) listed below.
- Ask your family and friends to help you take part in non-gambling activities.
- When you feel compelled to gamble, do something else. Exercise. Take a warm bath or shower. Spend time on a hobby.
- Get involved in school, church, and community activities. These can help distract you from gambling.



Get more information from:

HealthyLearn® • www.HealthyLearn.com

Gamblers Anonymous International Service Office

213.386.8789

www.gamblersanonymous.org