

# Gambling Addiction

## What is gambling addiction?

For the most part, gambling in moderation is a socially acceptable behavior. Gambling addiction is another story. If left untreated, a gambling addiction can negatively affect your financial situation, relationships, and other aspects of your life.

According to the [National Council on Problem Gambling](#), problem gambling affects more than 2 percent of Americans. If you have a gambling addiction, you may feel an uncontrollable urge to buy lottery tickets, visit casinos, play slot machines, bet on sports, or gamble online. The specific type and frequency of your gambling behavior may vary. But in general, you will be unable to control that behavior. You will continue gambling, even in the face of negative social, financial, or legal consequences.

The majority of people with gambling addictions are men. But this type of addiction can also affect women.

## What are the symptoms of gambling addiction?

People with addictions often try to hide their condition, but a gambling addiction can be difficult to conceal. You may need frequent access to casinos or online gambling pools. Even if you gamble at home when no one is around, your addiction may begin to show itself in other areas of your life.

If you have a gambling addiction, you may display some or all of the following behaviors:

- obsessing over any type of gambling
- gambling to feel better about life
- failing to control your gambling
- avoiding work or other commitments to gamble
- neglecting bills and expenses and using the money for gambling
- selling possessions to gamble
- stealing money to gamble
- lying about your gambling habit
- feeling guilty after a gambling session

- taking bigger and bigger risks while gambling

You may also experience the following consequences from your gambling addiction:

- disintegrating relationships or friendships
- loss of house, job, car, or other personal possessions

People with gambling addiction don't always gamble frequently. But when they do start gambling, they may be unable to stop.

## **What causes gambling addiction?**

When you have a gambling addiction, an area of your brain called the insula may be overactive. This hyperactive region may lead to distorted thinking. This can cause you to see patterns in random sequences and continue gambling after near misses.

Your brain may respond to the act of gambling in the same way that an alcoholic's brain responds to a drink. The more you feed your habit, the worse it will become.

## **How is gambling addiction treated?**

With the right treatment, gambling addiction is manageable. Unlike someone with a food addiction, you don't need the object of your addiction to survive. You simply need to learn how to develop a healthy and balanced relationship with money.

It's important for you to quit gambling completely, since even occasional gambling can lead to a relapse. A program of recovery can help you develop impulse control. In general, gambling addiction is treated with similar methods as other addictions.

### **Inpatient rehabilitation program**

Although not frequently required, some people find that they need the structure afforded by an inpatient program at a treatment center to overcome a gambling addiction. This type of program may be especially helpful if you're unable to avoid casinos or other gambling venues without help. You will need to stay in the treatment facility for a set amount of time, anywhere from 30 days to an entire year.

## **Outpatient rehabilitation program**

Outpatient treatment programs are more commonly used by people with gambling addictions. In this type of program, you will attend classes at a facility. You may also attend group sessions and one-on-one therapy. You will continue to live at home and participate in school, work, or other daily activities.

## **Twelve-step programs**

Gamblers Anonymous (GA), or other 12-step programs, may also help you overcome your gambling addiction. This type of program may be especially helpful if you can't afford more intensive rehabilitation options. It follows the same model as Alcoholics Anonymous, helping you build a support network of other recovered gambling addicts. You may meet with group members one or more times per week.

## **Psychotherapy or cognitive behavioral therapy**

In addition to group counseling or support sessions, you may also benefit from one-on-one therapy. Gambling addiction can stem from deeper emotional or avoidance issues. You will need to deal with these underlying issues in order to change self-destructive patterns, including your gambling addiction. Counseling gives you a place to open up and address these problems.

**Cognitive behavioral therapy definition:** CBT is a problem-focused form of psychotherapy in which the patient and therapist actively work together to identify and change patterns of thinking or behavior that may lead to self-destructive actions.

## **Medication**

In some cases, you may need medication to help you overcome your gambling urges. Your gambling addiction might result from an underlying mental health condition, such as bipolar disorder. In these cases, you must learn to manage the underlying condition to develop better impulse control.

## **Lifestyle changes**

Dealing with the financial consequences of gambling is sometimes the hardest part of the recovery process. In the beginning, you may need to turn over financial responsibilities to a spouse or trusted friend. You may also need to avoid places and situations that can trigger your urge to gamble, such as casinos or sporting events.

# What support resources are available?

If you suspect you or someone you love has a gambling addiction, talk to your doctor or mental health professional. They can help you find the information and support you need. Several organizations also provide information about gambling addiction and treatment options. They can help guide you to local or online support services.

You may find the following organizations and resources helpful:

- [Gamblers Anonymous](#)
- [Debtors Anonymous](#)
- [National Council on Problem Gambling](#)

# What is the outlook for gambling addiction?

Like any addiction, compulsive gambling can be difficult to stop. You may find it embarrassing to admit that you have a problem, especially since many people gamble socially without developing an addiction. Overcoming the shame or embarrassment that you feel will be a big step on the road to recovery.

A recovery program, one-on-one counseling, medication, and lifestyle changes may help you overcome your gambling addiction. If you don't treat your gambling problem, it can lead to serious financial issues. It can also negatively affect your relationships with family members, friends, and others. Effective treatment can help you avoid these consequences and mend your relationships through recovery.

ZDROJ: [www.healthline.com](http://www.healthline.com)

VIDEO:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BF5SzIN63w8>