

## Gambling

Are the effects of gambling a problem for you or someone you care for?

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## Are the effects of gambling a problem for you or someone you care for?

In today's world the opportunity to gamble is easy to access and available 24 hours a day. For some gambling can be a pleasurable past-time. They can participate in a controlled and fiscally responsible way.

Unfortunately for some individuals, gambling becomes an addiction and can create many negative issues in their lives. If you feel that your gambling is getting out of control or you have a problem there is help. By the time gambling has become a problem it has often impacted on several areas of a person's life.

Up to 90% of adults in Australia have gambled at some point in their life.

The latest research suggests that about 1% of the population has a gambling problem.

Wondering about gambling behaviour? Not sure if it's a problem? Find out what the signs of problem gambling.

### Signs of a problem

Can include: (These are common signs but not conclusive) Individuals may show just a few or several of these signs.

- increasing levels of debt
- money missing from wallets and accounts
- struggling to pay bills on time
- borrowing money on a regular basis
- taking money from petty cash at work

- taking out many loans
- lying to friends and family
- being secretive about how one spends time, payslips or financial records
- many unpaid bills
- becoming withdrawn
- changes in personality including: Feeling more moody, irritable, angry, depressed, or suicidal
- missing work or having trouble concentrating at work
- prioritising spending time and money on gambling rather than spending time with friends
- thinking that continued gambling will fix financial problems
- feeling like the gambling has taken over
- lack of food or supplies in the home

## How to get help yourself

The First step to helping yourself with a gambling addiction is to admit that you have a problem. There are several ways to get help.

- Seek professional help. Talk to your GP about who can help and where to go. Your GP may refer you to a psychologist or therapist. Treatments may include psychotherapy or talk therapy, cognitive behavioural therapy, and developing cognitive tools to help you resist the urge to gamble and change behaviours.
- Access free services. There are several helplines and website that can help inform and support you to overcome a gambling addiction. Some organisations offer free professional counselling and financial counselling.
- Learn about gambling addiction. Understanding the characteristics of addiction, and the personal issues that cause you to gamble can assist you in developing a plan to overcome your addictions.
- Understand the stages of change you may go through in your efforts to quit.
  1. Admitting there is a problem
  2. Getting ready to accept help and change their behaviours
  3. Taking action to stop or reduce gambling
  4. Maintaining the change
- Join a support group. Support groups in conjunction with other therapies can be very helpful. Support groups often have programs and strategies that can be useful and often use a sponsor system.
- Consider medication. Talk to your medical health professionals about your addiction and what medications may be helpful.
- Implement regulatory mechanisms. This may include setting limits on time and money spent per week on gambling. Keeping a journal of your gambling may be helpful.
- Relapses happen. Do not beat yourself up or give up just because you had a relapse. Recognise it for what it is and continue with your program to get out from under addiction.

## How to help someone else with a gambling problem

It might be hard to help someone who has a gambling problem especially if they are not ready to stop or do not realise they have a problem.

To talk to someone that can help guide you call Gambler's Help on 1800 858 858.

Effective communication and having a plan is the key to positive outcomes.

- Access free services that can help support and guide you to care for yourself, your family members and the individual with the gambling addiction. (See helpful links below or call gambling helplines)
- Develop an action plan. It may be confronting and stressful process from you and the person you are trying to help.
- Try to understand the emotions and feelings that you may have and the other person may be feeling. Such as guilt, shame, fear anger, hurt etc.
- Set boundaries for the discussion. If things start getting out of control take a break and try again at another time.
- Try to focus your conversation around your concerns for the person, your relationship and family rather than sounding as if you are blaming or accusing as this is likely to turn the conversation towards the negative.
- Listen to the person and ask questions to get their perspective.
- Assure the individual that you are acting out of concern and care.
- Use "I statements". I am concerned about the amount of time and money you spend away from home. Avoid "you statements". You worry my when you gamble.
- Consider the stages of change the person may go through in their efforts to quit.
  1. Admitting there is a problem
  2. Getting ready to accept help and change their behaviours
  3. Taking action to stop or reduce gambling
  4. Maintaining the change
- Remember that it is not uncommon for people to have setbacks.
- Seek outside help when needed.

## Treatments for gambling addictions

Some people may need to seek professional help for their gambling addiction. Treatments may include psychotherapy, cognitive behavioural therapy, medication, learning to replace gambling with healthier habits and support groups.

Gambling Help Online Factsheet: Signs of a problem  
[www.gamblinghelponline.org.au/concerned-about-someone/signs-of-a-problem](http://www.gamblinghelponline.org.au/concerned-about-someone/signs-of-a-problem)

## Helpful links

For regional services near you, please use the [Directory](#) or the [Service Finder Navigational Tool](#) on this website.

Anglicare 1800 809 722 [www.anglicare.vic.org.au](http://www.anglicare.vic.org.au)

Gamblers Anonymous (03) 9696 6108 [www.gansw.org.au](http://www.gansw.org.au)

Gambling Help Online 1800 858 858 [www.gamblinghelponline.org.au](http://www.gamblinghelponline.org.au)

Gamblers Help Southern (03) 9575 5353 M-F 9am to 5pm [www.gamblershelpsouthern.org.au](http://www.gamblershelpsouthern.org.au)

Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation 1800 262 346

<https://www.responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/>

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[www.gamblinghelponline.org.au/concerned-about-someone/signs-of-a-problem](http://www.gamblinghelponline.org.au/concerned-about-someone/signs-of-a-problem)  
Problem Gambling [www.problemgambling.gov.au](http://www.problemgambling.gov.au)

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