

## How can you prevent problem gambling?

Keep a balance in your life. Make careful decisions about how you spend your time, money and energy.

### Here are some ideas that may help:

■ Set a limit on the amount of time that you spend gambling, and on the size of your bets. If you go over the limits often, get help.

■ Problem gamblers often gamble alone, so get involved in activities with other people. Take an evening class, join a club or sports group, become a volunteer.

■ Use your gambling money for something special instead. Take up a hobby, save for a vacation, or treat your children to a surprise outing.

■ Learn more about gambling. Read books or borrow videos from your local library or community agencies, so you have a complete picture of all aspects of gambling and problem gambling.

### Help is available

If you are concerned that you or someone you know may have a gambling problem, help is available.

Call 1-800-665-9676 or contact your local AADAC office, listed in the telephone directory under Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission.

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**AADAC**

Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission  
An Agency of the Government of Alberta

*when it's  
no longer  
a game...*

**problem  
gambling**

**AADAC**

## What is gambling?

For many people, gambling is something they do occasionally, as a form of recreation. They buy a lottery ticket, bet a few dollars on a horse, or drop a loonie into a machine. When the draw or the game is over, they go on to other non-gambling activities.

## What is problem gambling?

For some people, however, gambling becomes a problem, and the problem can range from minor to quite serious.

It could be as simple as gambling a little more often than intended, or spending a little more money than intended—maybe making it hard for you to pay the utility bills or meet a car payment some month.

It could also be more serious than that. It could mean you're spending a lot more time and money than you can really afford on gambling, and it's having a noticeable negative effect in other areas of your life—causing excessive debt, marriage problems, even illegal activity.

## What are some signs that a person may have a gambling problem?

### Spends large amounts of time gambling.

This allows little time for family, friends or hobbies.

### Begins to place larger, more frequent bets.

Larger bets are necessary to get the same level of excitement.

### Has growing debts.

The person with a gambling problem is secretive or defensive about money, and may borrow money from family members or friends.

### Pins hopes on the "big win."

The problem gambler believes the big win, rather than changing the gambling behaviour, will solve financial or other problems.

### Promises to cut back on gambling.

The problem gambler is unable to reduce or stop gambling.

### Refuses to explain behaviour, or lies about it.

The person with a gambling problem may be away from home or work for long periods of time, or may make an unusually high number of telephone calls.

### Feels frequent highs and lows.

If unable to gamble, the problem gambler misses the thrill of the action and may be bad-tempered, withdrawn, depressed or restless. During a winning streak, the gambler is on a high.

### Boasts about winning.

The person with a gambling problem loves to relive a win but will make light of losses when others express their concern. Wins and losses may also be kept a secret.

### Prefers gambling to a special family occasion.

The problem gambler may arrive late or miss family events such as birthdays, school activities and other family gatherings.

### Seeks new places to gamble close to home and away.

The problem gambler may insist that evenings out or even family vacations be at places where gambling is available.

## Are you at risk of becoming a problem gambler?

Anyone who gambles can become a problem gambler. The risk varies from one person to the next. For some it is very low, while for others it is high.

There are many factors which affect your risk of becoming a problem gambler. These include:

- *how often you gamble*
- *how much money you bet*
- *what you believe about gambling*
- *how many of your family or friends gamble*
- *whether (and how much) you use alcohol or other drugs when you gamble*
- *how good you feel about yourself*
- *what kinds of gambling you like*
- *how you react to the thrill of a big risk*

How many of these factors are present in your life? Your chances of becoming a problem gambler depend on the number of factors in your life and the ways these factors interact.