

# PROBLEM & PATHOLOGICAL GAMBLING

**It's important to realize that most people will lose more than they win.  
Knowing the odds always favour the house, set limits for yourself.**

Most people gamble for entertainment. For a small percentage **4.6%** gambling can become a serious problem. Harvard Medical School estimated that **1.6%** of the adults in North America experience pathological gambling.

For pathological gamblers, their need to gamble may become the most important activity in their life and they continue to gamble in spite of negative consequences including financial ruin, legal problems, loss of career or family, or even suicidal thoughts. Researchers suspect that problem gambling is often a symptom of an underlying condition, such as clinical depression or drug or alcohol problems.

While internet gambling is, at present, the least common gambling activity, internet gamers have the most serious levels of gambling behaviors.

A KPMG study (2004) found that gambling was the highest motivator for fraud and the second highest motivator for serious property crime.

## **Characteristics of a Problem Gambler (Gamblers Anonymous)**

- **Inability and unwillingness to accept reality** - escape into the dream world of gambling.
- **Emotional insecurity** - emotionally comfortable only when gambling.
- **Immaturity** - unwilling to grow up and wanting all the good things in life without any great effort.

## **Gambling and Youth**

**A startling 63% of 18-24-year-olds believe they have a 50/50 chance of winning. However, chance has no memory and no history. It is never predictable.** (Within Limits. Responsible Gambling Council)

- The rate of problem gamblers among youth is 2 to 4 times that of adults.
- With the expansion of localized and internet gambling youth have gained access to more gambling opportunities.
- The shift from social to problem gambling is more rapid for youth.
- Youth with serious gambling problems are at a greater risk for suicidal thoughts and attempts.
- Youth gambling is associated with irrational control beliefs, eg their ability to control the outcome, being able to beat the system and gambling as a way of making money.
- More males gamble than females.
- Gambling problems among youth are associated with poor coping skills.
- In males, the disorder typically begins in adolescence.
- Impulsive decision-makers are also more likely to develop gambling problems.





## How to Recognize Problem Gambling

### Someone may have a problem if they gamble-

- To chase losses - to "win back" lost money
- To pay debts or solve financial difficulties
- To celebrate any good fortune
- To escape daily pressures, frustrations and obligations
- Under the influence of alcohol or other drugs
- For longer periods of time or more frequently
- Until all their money is gone
- Larger amounts of money than intended
- Even though they are unable to repay debts
- Relying on others to pay the financial consequences
- Despite repeated unsuccessful attempts to control, cutback or stop gambling

### As a result of gambling, they-

- Miss work, jeopardizing jobs or career opportunities
- Neglect family and social activities
- Lose ambition or efficiency
- Borrow or sell belongings to finance gambling
- Lie about or hide evidence of gambling
- Commit illegal acts to finance gambling

### Obsessed with gambling, they-

- Are preoccupied with how to get money for gambling
- Are restless, nervous, or irritable if unable to gamble
- Feel anxious, hopeless, depressed, guilty, or suicidal
- Have difficulty sleeping because of the urge to gamble
- Feel annoyed by criticisms or their gambling

British Columbia has a **Voluntary Self-Exclusion Program** that may help some problem gamblers. Enlisting in the program is entirely voluntary and must be done by the person seeking exclusion from all facilities with slot machines and/or commercial bingo halls. You provide ID, a photograph, and complete a simple form. All of which will be handled confidentially. You decide the period you would like to be excluded from 6 months to 3 years.

The information is forwarded to security offices in all casinos and commercial bingo halls in BC. A voluntary self-exclusion cannot be revoked until the agreed upon period of time is completed. There are penalties if you violate your self-exclusion contract. Contact the Voluntary Self-Exclusion Program at: BC Lottery Corporation's Consumer Service at 1.866.815.0222 or [www.bclc.com](http://www.bclc.com).

## Information & Counselling Resources

If you, or someone you care about has a gambling problem, contact one or more of the following:



- **Gamblers Anonymous** - listed in your local telephone book or [www.gamblersanonymous.org](http://www.gamblersanonymous.org)
- **Problem Gambling Help Line** (24 hour toll-free) 1.888.795.6111
- **Responsible Gambling Council** (links to Canadian treatment programs and help lines) [www.responsiblegambling.org](http://www.responsiblegambling.org)
- **Centre for Addiction and Mental Health** for a problem gambling resource package [www.camh.net](http://www.camh.net)
- **YOUR EFAP**

YOUR LOGO HERE

**For confidential assistance**  
**Brown Crawshaw 1.800.668.2055**  
[www.browncrawshaw.com](http://www.browncrawshaw.com)