

What is problem gambling?

When gambling becomes a problem

Gambling can take the form of pokies, lotto, scratchies, card games, racing or other forms of betting. Each year, 70% of Australians participate in some type of gambling, but for some, gambling can quickly become a problem.

Problem gambling does not have to mean you are totally out of control; it is any gambling behaviour that disrupts your life, or the life of your loved ones. For many, accepting that their gambling is becoming a problem can be difficult. A common reaction is to minimise, hide or deny gambling problems and the harm it could be causing. Some people might also actively lie to themselves or others about how much money or time is being spent on gambling.

Impact of problem gambling

- Debt or other financial problems
- Relationship problems — arguments, disagreements or loss of connection with friends and family
- Loss of a job or problems at work due to lack of motivation, absences, inability to concentrate on work
- Mental and emotional health concerns — increased stress, depression, panic attacks
- Negative impacts on family, especially children — may start getting in the way of being a good parent
- Loss of control — gambling can be addictive and starts to take over, it can be hard to stop even when you know it is causing you and your family harm

Gambling facts

- The average amount a problem gambler loses per year is \$21,000
- People with gambling problems are six times more likely than non-gamblers to get divorced
- Problem gamblers are four times more likely to suffer from alcohol abuse
- Children with parents who are problem gamblers are up to 10 times

Source: www.lifeline.org.au

more likely to become problem gamblers themselves (source: The Problem Gambling Treatment and

Research Centre, Children at risk of developing problem gambling, May 2010)

How do I know if I have a problem?

If you experience any of the following:

- Spend more money and time than you intend to on gambling
- Feel guilty and ashamed about your gambling
- Try to win back your losses
- Miss important things in life such as family time, work, leisure activities or appointments because of gambling
- Think about gambling every day
- Have arguments with friends or family about your gambling
- Lie or steal to get money for gambling
- Get into debt or struggle financially due to gambling
- Worry about any other aspect of your gambling activities

How to help yourself

Taking steps to get help now to overcome gambling problems can help you regain control of your money, time and life, and reduce the impacts on your mental health, family, and relationships.

Identify or admit you may have a problem or be at risk of developing a problem.

Talk to someone you trust about your gambling. This will be the first step to finding the best way forward and developing a plan to cut down or stop.

Call the Gambling Helpline (1800 858 858 — any time 24 hours). They can talk to you confidentially and provide information and self-help tools.

Contact a gambling help service such as Gamblers Anonymous or another service in your local community. Even one session with a counsellor or support worker can help you assess your situation and set up a plan to help you.

Ask a friend to check in with you. Having the support of a close friend can be very helpful.

See a financial counsellor. After seeking help for your problem gambling behaviours, a financial counsellor can assess your financial concerns and help set up a plan to manage debts.

What can you do to help?

- Identify you have a problem
- Talk to someone you trust
- Contact the Gambling Help online — 1800 858 858
- Contact a local support group such as Gambling Anonymous (GA)
- Ask a friend to check in with you Where to go to for support and more information

Below are some of the places to go for information and support: Gambling Help Online — 1800 858 858 (24hrs) Gamblers Anonymous — <http://gaaaustralia.org.au>

Problem gambling does not have to mean you are totally out of control, it is any gambling behaviour that disrupts your life or relationships. It can be hard to know if your gambling is getting out of control. Seek help and take back control of your life.