



Warning Signs of Problem Gambling

A diagnosis of gambling disorder (DSM-V) requires at least meeting four of the following during the last 12 months. Often referred to as the “hidden addiction,” it can take some time before anyone notices that someone has a gambling problem. Gamblers, by nature, know how to bluff. Know the signs.

“Looking back on it, I guess it’s not surprising that I developed a gambling problem. I had a risk-taking personality.”

“Ultimately, I don’t feel the need to label myself as either an alcoholic or a gambling addict. I consider myself simply and “addict” in general. And understanding that concept has been a key in my overall recovery.”

“What I know now but didn’t know then was that people with alcohol or drug addictions can “flip flop” addictions and simply replace one with another, such as gambling addiction.”

-  **Increased frequency of gambling activity**
-  **Increased amount of money gambled**
-  **Gambling for longer periods of time than originally planned**
-  **Bragging about wins, but not talking about losses**
-  **Pressuring others for money when financial problems arise**
-  **Lying about how money is spent**
-  **Escaping to other excesses (alcohol, drugs, sleep, video games, etc.)**
-  **Denying there is a problem**



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As the state advocate for problem gambling, we are available for community presentations.

Minnesota gambling helpline
1-800-333-HOPE (4673)

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Gambling When in Recovery

It’s common for people in recovery to “switch addictions.”

Learn how to gamble responsibly so you don’t develop a gambling problem.





Gambling When in Recovery

When Gambling Becomes an Addiction

While gambling provides a source of enjoyable entertainment, for many people in recovery, one in three experience problems that significantly affect their lives. Problem gambling, or gambling disorder, is similar to other addictions in that:

- It has a preoccupation with experiencing a “high” (winning in this case),
- Withdrawal, restlessness or irritability are characteristics of someone attempting to stop,
- Repeated efforts to cut down or stop are unsuccessful, and
- It continues despite social, legal or occupational consequences.

Gambling disorder is different from other addictions in that:

- It is much more difficult to detect than drug or alcohol use,
- The addiction can progress very quickly after a large win, and
- Gamblers tend to feel significantly more shame, guilt or depression, and have higher suicide ideation and attempts than other addictions.

Gambling as Recreation

Science has demonstrated that addiction causes a rewiring of the neural circuits of the brain. This occurs whether the addiction is related to alcohol, drugs, gambling or something else. Because each of these addictions creates a similar effect on the brain, it’s not uncommon for one in recovery to “switch” addictions. For this reason, people recovering from substance use addiction or experiencing problems with anxiety or depression are at a greater risk for developing an addiction to gambling.

Therefore, if you choose to gamble, be mindful you’re not switching one addiction for another. By considering the following guidelines, you’ll significantly reduce your risk of developing a gambling addiction.

- **Always gamble with others rather than alone.** Recreational gambling is most often combined with other activities and done socially with family, friends or colleagues.
- **Set parameters on how often and how long you gamble.** Recreational gambling should be done for limited amounts of time.
- **Think of money spent on gambling as an entertainment expense.** Set predetermined limits for losses that are acceptable, considering what’s appropriate for your overall budget.
- **Remember that nearly everyone who gambles loses money over time.** Gambling should be thought of as a recreational activity and not as a source of financial gain or sustainable income.

- **Don’t spend more than 1% of your pre-tax household income per month.**
- **Don’t gamble more than four days a month.**
- **Don’t partake in more than two forms of gambling.**

Help is Available

If you think you are not in control of your gambling, confidential, no-cost help is available for Minnesotans. Call the Minnesota problem gambling helpline at 1-800-333-HOPE (4673), available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Other resources can be found at www.MNAPG.org.

Curious how your gambling compares with others? Check out this survey at www.mnapg.evolutionhealth.care.



“The biggest danger of going to the casino for someone in recovery is that they’ll get a “big win” that can trigger their alcohol or drug addiction.”

54-year-old man in recovery

“I didn’t think I could get addicted to gambling. I’m an alcoholic and thought I would recognize the signs.”

38-year-old helpline caller

“I’m a recovering alcoholic. I thought I could keep my gambling from getting out of control. I was wrong.”

57-year-old helpline caller

