

GAMBLING



Many people do gamble responsibly. For some, however, gambling can become a problem. According to the UK Gambling Commission, 44% of the adult population in Great Britain have participated in some form of gambling activity in the past 12 months. For most players, gambling never becomes anything more than a hobby. However, gambling can be addictive.

What is a gambling addict?

People with a gambling addiction can't control their urge to gamble, even if they are losing a lot of money. They are willing to risk something of value in the hope that the reward will be more valuable. Gambling addiction can seriously affect all areas of life.

How does gambling affect the family?

Financial problems due to gambling can lead to the breakdown of families. The significant other and the children of a gambling addict suffer the negative consequences of the gambler's actions. They wind up in debt, unable to pay bills, and very often homeless because of the gambler's addiction.

When you gamble, your brain releases dopamine, the feel-good neurotransmitter that makes you feel excited.

You'd expect to only feel excited when you win, but your body produces this neurological response even when you lose.

Consequently, we may have to gamble more and more to feel the same level of pleasure.



Some gambling products, like pokies and roulette, make us feel like we're winning, even when we're not. This encourages us to keep gambling to try to recapture that winning feeling.

In 2022, around 1,400 people were referred to NHS England for help with gambling addiction, which was up by a third on the previous year.

Symptoms

- Signs and symptoms of compulsive gambling (gambling disorder) can include:
- Being preoccupied with gambling, such as constantly planning gambling activities and how to get more gambling money.
- Needing to gamble with increasing amounts of money to get the same thrill.
- Trying to control, cut back or stop gambling, without success.
- Feeling restless or irritable when you try to cut down on gambling.
- Gambling to escape problems or relieve feelings of helplessness, guilt, anxiety, or depression.
- Trying to get back lost money by gambling more (chasing losses)
- Lying to family members or others to hide the extent of your gambling.
- Risking or losing important relationships, a job, or school or work opportunities because of gambling
- Asking others to bail you out of financial trouble because you gambled money away.
- Most casual gamblers stop when losing or set a limit on how much they're willing to lose. But people with a compulsive gambling problem are compelled to keep playing to recover their money — a pattern that becomes increasingly destructive over time. Some people may turn to theft or fraud to get gambling money.
- Some people with a compulsive gambling problem may have periods of remission — a length of time where they gamble less or not at all. But without treatment, the remission usually isn't permanent.



It can happen to anybody.....

Paul Merson has struggled with gambling addiction for 35 years. The illness has led the ex-Arsenal and England forward to consider suicide three times. He tells Paul Gallagher why he is now helping others through a unique new platform.



“Addiction is a strong thing – it can soon tell you in your head, “you know what, I'm all right now? Maybe I can have that one little bet.”

Every gambling addict who has ever tried to stop betting can relate to this statement.

<https://www.netflix.com/gb/title/81710564#:~:text=Former%20footballer%20Paul%20Merson%20in%20interviews,societal%20costs%20of%20gambling%20addiction> – watch the full episode on Netflix.

Ivan Toney placed 13 historical bets on his own club to lose and has been diagnosed with a gambling addiction, as the written reasons for his eight-month ban were revealed by the FA.

The England international admitted 232 breaches of betting rules between February 2017 and January 2021 and was banned from all football activity until 17 January and fined £50,000.



Prior to Drake taking the throne for being a celebrity who promotes the gambling lifestyle to his fanbase, **Floyd Mayweather** (@floydmayweather) was the king. Even before sports betting became legal in the United States in 2018, he bragged on social media about his wagers on major sporting events.

Ways to stay safe when gambling:

- Have a break.
- Keep track of how much you are spending.
- Keep a clear mind so that you don't become overwhelmed.
- Make sure that you are not becoming dependent on gambling.
- Block yourself from gambling for up to six weeks.



Think about why you are gambling

There are many reasons why people gamble, and these reasons can vary and change over time. It may be helpful to think about why you are gambling, for example, is it a social activity or has it turned into a habit?

People gamble for many reasons: the adrenaline rush to win money, socialise or escape from worries or stress. However, for some people, gambling can get out of control. If you find yourself betting more than you can afford to lose, borrowing money, or feeling stressed and anxious about gambling, you may have a problem.

A large percentage of problem and pathological gamblers end up in divorce court. According to the National Gambling Impact Study Commission and the Gambling Impact and Behavior Study, **divorce rates for problem gamblers hover around 40%**, and divorce rates for pathological gamblers are approximately 54%.

Think carefully about your motivations to gamble and be aware if these begin to change.

WHEN THE **FUN** STOPS **STOP**

gambleaware.co.uk

Support links

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/addiction-support/gambling-addiction/>

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/addictions/gambling-addiction-and-problem-gambling.htm>

If you or someone you know is struggling with gambling-related problems, contact the [National Gambling Helpline](#) **0808 8020 1333** Free of charge, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

<https://www.gamcare.org.uk/get-support/talk-to-us-now/>

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