

Gambling addiction, also known as *compulsive gambling*, may be a type of impulse-control disorder. Compulsive gamblers keep gambling whether they're up or down, broke or flush, happy or depressed. Even when they know the odds are against them, even when they can't afford to lose, people with a gambling addiction can't "stay off the bet." Problem and pathological gambling may affect anywhere from 2 to 4 percent of the population.

Persistent and recurrent maladaptive gambling behavior as indicated by five (or more) of the following:

Preoccupation: The person is preoccupied with gambling and has frequent thoughts about gambling experiences, handicapping or planning the next venture, or thinking of ways to get money with which to gamble, etc.

Tolerance: Similar to drug tolerance, the person needs to gamble with increasing amounts of money in order to achieve the desired excitement or "rush"

Loss of Control: The person has made repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back, or stop gambling

Withdrawal: The person is restless or irritable when attempting to cut down or stop gambling

Escape: The person gambles as a way of escaping from problems or to relieve a dysphoric mood (e.g., feelings of helplessness, guilt, anxiety, depression)

Chasing: After losing money gambling, the person often returns another day to get even ("chasing" one's losses)

Lying: Lies to family members, therapist, or others to conceal the extent of involvement with gambling

Illegal Activity: The person has committed illegal acts such as forgery, fraud, theft, or embezzlement to finance gambling

Risked Relationships: The person has jeopardized or lost a significant relationship, job, or educational or career opportunity because of gambling

Bailout: Relies on others, such as friends or family, to provide money to relieve a desperate financial situation caused by gambling

The gambling behavior is not better accounted for by a manic episode

Normal Gambling vs. Pathological or Compulsive Gambling

Gambling is defined as any betting or wagering for self or others, whether for money or not, no matter how slight or insignificant, where the outcome is uncertain or depends upon chance or "skill." Gambling is classified into four types: social, professional, problem, and pathological.

Social gambling typically occurs with friends or coworkers. The gambling lasts for a limited period of time and the losses are predetermined and reasonable. In professional gambling, the risks are limited and discipline is exercised.

Problem gambling is marked by:

- Preoccupation
- Narrowing of interests
- Continued behavior despite adverse consequences
- Failed attempts to cut down

Pathological gamblers:

- Have distortions of thinking such as denial, superstitions, overconfidence or a sense of power and control
- Believe that money is the cause of and the solution to all of their problems
- Tend to be highly competitive, energetic, restless, and easily bored
- Tend to be generous to the point of mania or extravagance
- Often are workaholics or binge workers who wait until the last moment before working hard

Note: This disorder is now less considered an impulse-control disorder according to the updated DSM-IV. It is now classified as a non-substance-related disorder, which means it is conceptualized more as an addictive behavior.