

Harmless or Cause for Concern?

While most parents do not have the same level of concern about exposing their children to a gambling habit as they do about alcohol or smoking, it is a behavior that should not be taken lightly. Gambling is found to have several of the same addictive effects as many other destructive behaviors. With this in mind, it is important for parents to be aware of the different types of gambling available in today's society, reasons teens give for gambling, and the warning signs that your child might be addicted to gambling, a problem sometimes referred to as the 'hidden illness.'

Types of Gambling

- Playing card or dice games for money
- Playing games of skill for money
- Playing on Internet gambling websites
- Playing BINGO for money
- Purchasing lottery tickets (including scratch-off tickets)
- Playing on gambling machines (including those at diners or restaurants)
- Engaging in raffles or office/class pools for money (the most common of which is betting on sports teams)

Reasons Teens Gamble

- To win money
- For fun and entertainment
- For excitement
- For the challenge
- To socialize
- To combat boredom

Signs and Symptoms of Problem Gambling

Preoccupation: Preoccupation with gambling includes a desire to relive past gambling experiences, planning the next venture, or thinking of ways to obtain funds to gamble

Tolerance: The need to gamble to increase amounts of money in order to reach desired effect

Withdrawal: Feeling restless or irritable when attempting to cut down on gambling

Escape: Gambling as a way to escape from problems or to relieve feelings such as helplessness, guilt, anxiety, or depression

Lying: Lying to family members, friends, or others to conceal the extent of their involvement

Stealing: 'Borrowing' money or stealing from family, friends, or others to fund their addiction

COMBATING ADDICTION

Where to Find Help

There are many resources in the State of New York for gambling addicts to help them overcome their destructive habit. The Gamblers Anonymous Hotlines for Long Island are (877) 533-4395 and (877) 442-4248. Meeting dates, times, and locations are also available on the association's website at www.gamblersanonymous.org. Additionally, addicts can find help from The New York Council on Problem Gambling Helpline at 1-800-437-1611, and students can seek guidance from their school counselor.

SOURCES: New York State 2006 OASAS Household Survey; Parenting Teens website www.parentingteens.org; Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) website www.pbs.org; and Gambling Addiction Help Guide website www.helpguide.org.

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TEEN GAMBLING: *A Recreational Activity on the Rise*

Whether at their friends' houses, over the Internet, or by purchasing lottery tickets at a local store, millions of teenagers across the nation are participating in an increasingly more accessible recreational pastime – gambling. While the majority of their gambling activities are relatively small in nature, the long-term risks are highly serious as many who begin gambling at a young age run the risk of developing addiction problems. Recent studies indicate that more than 70 percent of today's youth between the ages of 10 and 17 have gambled in the past year, a 25 percent increase from the 1988 statistic of 45 percent.

TEEN GAMBLING STATISTICS

- 72% of students in grades 7-12 in New York State have engaged in at least one gambling activity in the past year
- 20% of adolescents in New York State are currently at risk for or have a gambling problem
- 5% of adults in New York State currently have a gambling problem
- Males are three times more likely to develop a gambling problem or addiction
- Underage gamblers are also three times as likely to become compulsive gamblers
- Of the adults in New York State with a gambling problem, approximately 28% also experience a substance abuse disorder
- Teens with a gambling problem are more likely to engage in risky behavior such as unsafe sex, binge drinking, smoking marijuana, and skipping school
- Gamblers have the highest suicide rate of any addicted group
- Major depression is likely to occur in 76% of problem gamblers

STATEWIDE LEVEL OF GAMBLING PARTICIPATION AMONG ADULTS, AGE 18 AND OLDER*

**Based on 2006 data*

