

# Gambling and Teens: What You Need to Know

Gambling is not risk-free. Gambling can become a problem when it consumes a person's life. Here is information from the American Academy of Pediatrics about teen gambling, including how to identify a problem.

## Parents as Role Models

- You are the best role model for your children. Take a close look at your own attitudes and habits. Do you spend needed money on lottery tickets? Do you make frequent visits to the casino with hopes of striking it rich? Although gambling may be OK for you, you may be sending a message to your teen that gambling is a safe and healthy activity.
- Talk with your teen about gambling. Remind them that gambling is illegal for teens. Be clear about how you feel about gambling, and let them know what you expect of them. Help your teen develop ways to resist gambling and develop interests in other activities.
- Don't take your children with you to the casino even if child care is offered.

## Signs of a Gambling Problem

Identifying a gambling problem early is the key to successful treatment. If you feel your teen may have a problem, there are people in your community who can help, including pediatricians, counselors, teachers, and leaders in your place of worship. Here are signs to look out for around the house and in your teen.

- Finding gambling items like lottery tickets, betting sheets, and casino chips
- Unexplained debts
- Excessive TV sports watching and an overly intensive interest in the outcome of sports events
- Excessive "checking in" or internet use
- Buying expensive items
- Absences from school or work
- Anxiety and nervousness
- Stealing

Compulsive gambling is like other addictions. Outside help may be the only way a person can stop. Talk with your teen's doctor for information about treatment options, like individual counseling or family therapy.

## For More Information

- American Academy of Pediatrics: [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org) and [www.HealthyChildren.org](http://www.HealthyChildren.org)
- Gam-Anon International Service Office, Inc: [www.gam-anon.org](http://www.gam-anon.org)
- Gamblers Anonymous: [www.gamblersanonymous.org](http://www.gamblersanonymous.org)
- National Council on Problem Gambling: [www.ncpgambling.org](http://www.ncpgambling.org)
- North American Training Institute: [www.nati.org](http://www.nati.org)

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