

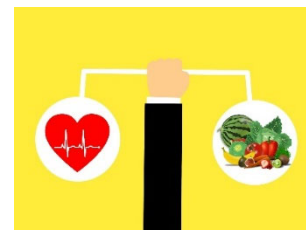


## FACT SHEET:

# Health impacts of problem gambling

### What does being “healthy” even mean?

The World Health Organization defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” (World Health Organization, n.d.)

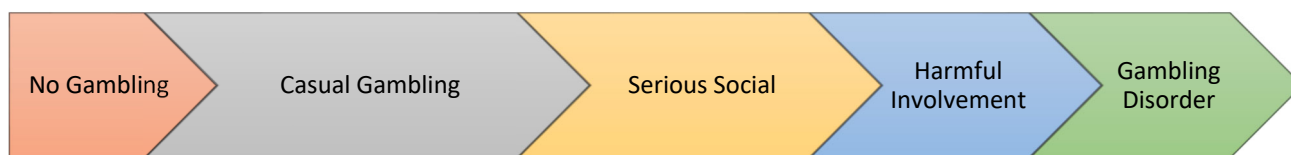


### Components that make up our overall physical health:

Adapted from (Fong D. T., 2017)

- Physical Activity
- Nutrition and diet
- Substance Use
- Medical care and self-care
- Rest and sleep
- Suicidal Thoughts and Attempts
- Stress-levels
- Other behavioral health issues
- Other mental health issues

Rates of health issues increase as the severity of problem gambling increases. Those with gambling disorders tend to have the highest rates of gambling-related health issues. (Morasco, vom Eigen, & Petry, 2006)



### Health issues associated with problem and disordered gambling include:

- Cardiac problems, liver disease, and increased use of medical services. (Morasco & Petry, 2006)
- Chronic stress leading to hypertension, cardiovascular disease, peptic ulcer disease, and exacerbation of baseline medical problems. (Fong T. , 2005)
- Fatigue, insomnia, minor respiratory ailments, intestinal distress, migraine headaches, high blood pressure, and cardiovascular disease. (Larimer, Lostutter, & Neighbors, 2006)



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1-800-547-6133 or chat at [www.evergreencpg.org](http://www.evergreencpg.org)

- Substance use disorders (especially alcohol and tobacco). (Petry, 2005)
- Changes in dopamine, serotonin, and norepinephrine systems. (Fong T. , 2005)

### **What health issues might people with Gambling Disorder self-report?**

Those with gambling disorders may associate a variety of health concerns with their gambling. Some of these may include:

- Not taking medications as prescribed or on schedule, because of gambling for several hours or days at a time.
- Gaining weight because of poor eating habits while in gambling establishments.
- Skipping meals because of gambling for extended hours and spending money on gambling rather than food.
- Poor hydration, either from not drinking enough fluids, or drinking only alcohol while gambling.
- Increased tobacco use for smokers while in gambling establishments and for non-smokers, being exposed to second-hand smoke.
- Lack of physical activity because of gambling being a sedentary activity.
- Lack of sleep, either because of staying up late gambling, or due to the stress of gambling-related problems.
- Restlessness, irritability, ulcers, digestive issues, and headaches associated with stress from gambling-related problems or withdrawal when unable to gamble.
- An overall lack of good self-care.
- Mental health issues including depression, panic attacks, thoughts of suicide, and suicide attempts.



### **Medications that can contribute to gambling problems for some:**

It is well established that some dopaminergic medications used to treat Parkinson's and Restless Leg Syndrome can increase urges to gamble, as well as other compulsive behaviors.

(Heiden, Heinz, & Romanczuk-Seiferth, 2017) (Dodd, et al., 2005) Notice of a possible increase in gambling urges is even listed among warnings and precautions for Mirapex (Pramipexole). (Drugs.com, 2020)



### **Are there medications available to treat gambling disorder?**

While the FDA has not yet approved any medications for the specific treatment of gambling disorders, there have been many research studies that have shown significant success when compared with placebos for certain opioid antagonists, serotonin reuptake inhibitors, and mood stabilizers. (Grant & Kim, Medication Management of Pathological Gambling, 2006) (Grant, Odlaug, & Schreiber, Pharmacological Treatments in Pathological Gambling, 2012) (Hollander, Kaplan, & Pallanti, 2004)



## Why should those in medical practice care about gambling?

Primary care settings have 2 to 5 times higher rates of problem gambling and gambling disorders among the people who seek treatment there as in the general population. As severity of gambling disorders increases, overall physical and mental health functioning decrease.

(Larimer, Lostutter, & Neighbors, 2006) (Morasco, vom Eigen, & Petry, 2006)

## What can General Practitioners and other medical professionals do about gambling-related health issues among their patients?

(Larimer, Lostutter, & Neighbors, 2006)



1. Screen for gambling problems. Using a simple screen, such as the Lie/Bet or SBIRT for Gambling, on assessment can reveal a number of patients whose health is affected by gambling issues than might otherwise remain undiscovered.
2. Offer referral information for local community Gamblers Anonymous (GA) or other self-help meetings or community support services.
3. Develop brief interventions like those available for smoking and substance use.
4. Refer to a certified problem gambling counselor for further evaluation and/or therapy.
5. Review research and complete training on the use of medications for gambling urges and cravings. (Grant & Kim, Medication Management of Pathological Gambling, 2006)

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