



## Teen Gambling

### How can I tell if my son or daughter is having a problem with gambling?

Look for the following warning signs:



- Finding gambling "stuff" like lottery tickets, betting sheets, and casino chips
- Excessive TV sports watching and an overly intensive interest in the outcome of sports events
- Visits to a casino, despite being underage
- Excessive "checking in" or spending time on the Internet
- Unexplained debts
- Flaunting large amounts of money or buying expensive items
- Absences from school or work
- Anxiety and nervousness
- Stealing for gambling money

Any game of chance or skill that is played for money is gambling. Most forms of gambling are illegal for anyone younger than 18 years. However, teens find their own ways to gamble, including

- Playing cards or dice games for money
- Playing games of skill for money (for example, pool, basketball)
- Buying lottery tickets and scratch cards
- Playing casino- and arcade-type games (like pull tabs and slot machines)
- Placing bets on sports events
- Gambling on the Internet

### What You Can Do

You are the best role model for your children. Take a close look at your own attitudes and habits. Do you spend your last dollar on lottery tickets? Do you make frequent visits to the casino with hopes of striking it rich? While gambling may be okay for you, you may be sending a message to your teen that gambling is a safe and healthy activity.

Talk with your children 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 children 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.

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 elders or clergy.



[Back to Top](#)

Compulsive gambling is like other addictions. Outside help may be the only way a person can stop. Talk with your pediatrician for information about treatment options, like individual counseling or family therapy, that can give compulsive gamblers the strength they need to quit.

**Last Updated** 11/2/2009

**Source** Gambling: Not a Safe Thrill (Copyright © 2007 American Academy of Pediatrics, Updated 10/2006)

The information contained on this Web site should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

