



What is Gambling Disorder?

Gambling is betting something valuable on an event that is determined by chance. The gambler hopes that he or she will 'win,' and gain something of value. Once placed, a bet cannot be taken back.

Mental health professionals have developed criteria that help to identify when someone has a problem. For example, many professionals use the DSM criteria. The DSM is a handbook published by the American Psychiatric Association. Professionals use the DSM to diagnose psychological problems. The newest version of the DSM lists Gambling Disorder alongside other addictive behaviors. The DSM-5 provides a series of symptoms commonly found among people with gambling problems. The symptoms include:

- A. Persistent and recurrent problematic gambling behavior leading to clinically significant impairment or distress, as indicated by the individual exhibiting four (or more) of the following in a 12-month period:
 1. Needs to gamble with increasing amounts of money in order to achieve the desired excitement.
 2. Is restless or irritable when attempting to cut down or stop gambling.
 3. Has made repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back, or stop gambling.
 4. Is often preoccupied with gambling (e.g., having persistent thoughts of reliving past gambling experiences, handicapping or planning the next venture, thinking of ways to get money with which to gamble).
 5. Often gambles when feeling distressed (e.g., helpless, guilty, anxious, depressed).
 6. After losing money gambling, often returns another day to get even ("chasing" one's losses).
 7. Lies to conceal the extent of involvement with gambling.
 8. Has jeopardized or lost a significant relationship, job, or educational or career opportunity because of gambling.
 9. Relies on others to provide money to relieve desperate financial situations caused by gambling.
- B. The gambling behavior is not better explained by a manic episode.

People meet the DSM standard for gambling disorder when they satisfy 4 of these criteria. Gambling problems exist with every form of gambling activity. It's not just associated with casinos or Internet gambling. Bingo players, lottery players, casino players, and friends playing poker all can develop gambling disorders.

People with Gambling Disorder continue gambling despite bad consequences. For example, they might not fulfill work or home duties, or have legal problems. They also might have repeated social problems, like getting into fights and conflicts with other people. People with Gambling Disorder are preoccupied with gambling. They may try to quit unsuccessfully or hide their behavior. They might also commit crimes to pay for their gambling.



Why Screen for Gambling Disorder?

- Gambling Disorder leads to financial, emotional, social, occupational, and physical harms.
- Gambling Disorder affects about 1% of the general population, and subclinical past year gambling-related problems affect 2-3% of the general population.
- As much as 10% of primary care patients report lifetime gambling disorder, and an additional 5% report lifetime subclinical problems.
- People with gambling-related problems are more likely to smoke, consume excessive amounts of caffeine, have more emergency department visits, and be obese.
- Although nearly 50% of people who have gambling problems are in treatment for "something," national studies have failed to identify anyone who currently reports being in treatment specifically for gambling-related problems.
- Many cases of gambling disorder go undetected, due to limited assessment for this problem.

Who Should Screen for Gambling Disorder?

- Addiction service providers
- Mental health service providers
- Physicians (e.g., primary care and emergency medicine)
- Gerontologists
- Pediatricians
- Educators
- Youth community leaders
- Employee Assistance Plan service providers
- Veterans groups

What Should Happen at a Gambling Disorder Screening?

- Complete a brief Gambling Disorder screen
- Discuss the results of a positive screen with a health provider
- Learn where to go for additional help and to access other resources, if necessary.
- Receive educational materials on Gambling Disorder



Brief Biosocial Gambling Screen (BBGS) Description

Overview

Brief screens can help people decide whether to seek formal evaluation of their gambling behavior. The 3-item BBGS¹ is based on the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) criteria for gambling disorder.

Scoring

A “yes” response to any single item indicates potential gambling-related problems and the need for additional evaluation.

Psychometric Properties

For identifying individuals with gambling disorder, Gebauer et al. (2010), report that the BBGS has good psychometric characteristics: high sensitivity (0.96) and high specificity (0.99). The Positive Predictive Value of the BBGS is 0.37. This suggests that one of three individuals who screen positive on the BBGS will be identified as having gambling disorder after full follow-up.

¹ Gebauer, L., LaBrie, R. A., Shaffer, H. J. (2010). Optimizing DSM IV classification accuracy: A brief bio-social screen for detecting current gambling disorders among gamblers in the general household population. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 55(2), 82-90.



Brief Biosocial Gambling Screen (BBS) Questionnaire

Name _____ Date _____

To screen for potential gambling-related problems, please complete the following questions.²

1. During the past 12 months, have you become restless irritable or anxious when trying to stop/cut down on gambling?

Yes

No

2. During the past 12 months, have you tried to keep your family or friends from knowing how much you gambled?

Yes

No

3. During the past 12 months did you have such financial trouble as a result of your gambling that you had to get help with living expenses from family, friends or welfare?

Yes

No

² An online version of the BBS is available at www.divisiononaddiction.org/bbgs_new/.



Cambridge Health Alliance Gambling Disorder Resources & Referral

1. e-Brief Biosocial Gambling Screen (available in 22 languages)
 - a. What is it? The Division on Addiction's brief (3-item) gambling disorder screener and intervention system derived from analyses of the National Epidemiology Survey on Alcohol & Related Conditions (Gebauer, LaBrie, & Shaffer, 2010).
 - b. http://www.divisiononaddiction.org/bbgs_new/
2. Your First Step to Change: Gambling (available in 22 languages)
 - a. What is it? The Division's gambling self-help toolkit, developed in collaboration with the Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling, with support from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the National Center for Responsible Gaming.
 - b. <http://www.gamblingselfchange.org/?step=welcome>
3. The Worldwide Addiction Gambling Education Report (*WAGER*)
 - a. What is it? The Division's free monthly online research review of the latest gambling science.
 - b. http://www.basionline.org/the_wager/
4. Expressions of Addiction
 - a. What is it? Dr. Howard Shaffer's photographic essay of case studies of gambling and other expressions of addiction.
 - b. <http://expressionsofaddiction.com>
5. Change Your Gambling, Change Your Life
 - a. What is it? Dr. Howard Shaffer's book about self-guided recovery from gambling and related disorders.
 - b. <http://www.health.harvard.edu/books/change-your-gambling-change-your-life>
6. Mount Auburn Hospital Prevention and Recovery Center
 - a. 330 Mount Auburn Street Cambridge, MA 02138
 - b. Phone: 617-499-5051 Fax: 617-499-5562



Local (Massachusetts) & National Gambling Disorder Resources

1. Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling (<http://www.masscompulsivegambling.org/>) helplines:
 - a. English: 1-800-426-1234
 - b. Chinese: 1-857-383-3557
 - c. Vietnamese: 1-857-383-3567
 - d. Khmer: 1-857-383-3577
 - e. Spanish: 1-857-383-3558
2. Massachusetts Gaming Commission (<http://massgaming.com/>)
3. Massachusetts Psychological Association (<http://www.masspsych.org/>)
4. Massachusetts Psychiatric Society (<http://www.psychiatry-mps.org/>)
5. National Council on Problem Gambling (<http://www.ncpgambling.org/>) helpline:
 - a. 1-800-522-4700
6. National Center for Responsible Gaming (<http://ncrg.org>)
7. American Academy of Health Care Providers in the Addictive Disorders (<http://www.americanacademy.org/>)
8. Other Key Hotlines

Suicide

Samaritans Statewide Hotline: 1-877-870-HOPE (4673)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

The Trevor Helpline: 866-4-U-TREVOR (488-7386)

Substance Abuse

Alcohol and Drug Hotline: 1-(800) 327-5050

Smokers Quit Line: 1-(800) TRY TO STOP



Cambridge Health Alliance



HARVARD
MEDICAL SCHOOL
TEACHING HOSPITAL

Domestic Violence

Safelink: 1-877-785-2020

Families and Children

Parental Stress Hotline: 1-(800) 632-8188

Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline (DSS): 1-(800) 792-5200

Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children: 1-(800) 442-3035

National Runaway Switchboard: 1-(800) 621-4000