

### Youth Gambling

**Definition:** Gambling involves any situation in which a person risks something of value on an uncertain outcome in hopes of increasing value or profit. It includes activities such as playing cards, dice games, or video games for money, buying raffle tickets, or betting on the outcomes of sporting events.

**Q: Is youth gambling a problem?**

A: Gambling is illegal for B.C. youth under the age of 19 years old. Although problem gambling has been primarily thought of as an adult behaviour, gambling activities appear to be particularly attractive to today's youth. A McGill University survey in Montreal showed that 30% of grade 7 students gamble at least once a week. In this sample, while 55% of youth are casual or recreation gamblers, 13% have gambling related problems, and 4 to 6% have a serious problem. Research also indicates that many adults with gambling problems were first exposed to gambling early in their lives – usually around the age of 10 years old. Youth are most often introduced to gambling by their families.

**Q: What do youth gamble on?**

A: The 2004 Canadian Campus Survey showed that, for undergraduate students, lottery and raffle tickets are the most popular (51%), followed by slot machines/video lottery (22.7%), casino gambling (19%), card, dice, or other games (17.7%), and sports event betting (10.8%). The least reported activities include betting on horse or dog races (3.7%), internet gambling (1.5%), and betting with a bookie (0.8%).

**Q: Why do youth gamble?**

A: Youth with serious gambling problems report that they typically forget their other problems when gambling or have the sense that nothing else matters. The three main reasons for gambling that youth report are excitement, enjoyment, and winning money. Other reasons why youth may gamble include peer pressure and to relieve feelings of boredom or depression.

**Q: What are the possible negative outcomes of youth gambling?**

A: Gambling can negatively affect relationships with friends and family. It can interfere with academic performance, employment and finances, and physical, social, and mental health.

**Possible warning signs!**

- ❖ Chasing losses, or gambling to win back money previously lost
- ❖ Larger and more frequent bets
- ❖ Preoccupation with thoughts of gambling
- ❖ Mood swings and feelings of stress during attempts to cut back
- ❖ Gambling to escape or forget problems
- ❖ Lying about gambling activities
- ❖ Borrowing or stealing money to gamble
- ❖ Others making comments about your gambling
- ❖ Failing grades, school absenteeism
- ❖ Appearing "spaced out" while gambling
- ❖ Pinning hopes on the "big win"

- ❖ **Among youth, gambling is now more common than using drugs or smoking!**
- ❖ **30% of grade 7 students gamble at least once a week!**
- ❖ **Youth are 2 to 4 times more likely than adults to become problem gamblers!**

**Websites with more information on youth gambling**

[www.luckyday.ca](http://www.luckyday.ca)

[www.youthbet.net](http://www.youthbet.net)

[www.friends4friends.ca](http://www.friends4friends.ca)

### **Q: When does gambling become a problem?**

Problem gambling occurs when you experience a loss of control over your gambling habits. You may begin spending more money than you intended, playing for longer than you planned to, wanting to gamble when you know you should be doing other things, not being able to stop thinking about gambling, or gambling to escape problems, to feel important, or to feel alive. Problem gamblers neglect their personal needs, their nutrition, and their sleep. Gambling problems may lead to money problems, difficulty in school, trouble keeping a job, problems with parents, troubled friendships and relationships, lying, stealing, problems with the law, feeling depressed and anxious, and feeling irritable when trying to stop.

### **Q: What can parents do to educate their children and to support them if they have a gambling problem?**

A: As a parent, you have an important role. Talk to your child about what gambling is and what the potential risks are. Online gambling is popular among many youth today, so monitor your child's online activities. Remind your child or youth that gambling is not legal if you are under the age of 19. For more information on gambling and its associated risks, or for resources and referrals call the BC Centre for Social Responsibility at (604) 870-5940 or visit [www.bccsr.ca](http://www.bccsr.ca).

### **Resources**

- B.C. Problem Gambling Help Line: 1-888-795-6111
- Gamblers Anonymous. [www.gamblersanonymous.org](http://www.gamblersanonymous.org)
- Youth and Gambling. Mental Health and Addiction Services. <http://www.camh.net/>
- BC's Partnership for Responsible Gambling. <http://www.bcresponsiblegambling.ca/problem/youth.html>
- Canadian Campus Survey, 2004. <http://www.ccsa.ca/Eng/Statistics/Canada/GS/Pages/default.aspx>
- Youth Problem Gambling. International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High Risk Behaviors. McGill University. <http://www.mcgill.ca/files/educp/YGCAnnualReport2008.pdf>