



Gambling Disorder (Compulsive Gambling; Gambling Addiction)



Overview

For many, occasional gambling is a fun way to relax and enjoy some mild risk-taking. But for some, the urge to gamble is uncontrollable. If you have this disorder, you can't stop gambling. It is an addiction. Losing makes you want to place riskier and riskier bets. This can destroy your life.

Causes

We don't fully understand what causes this disorder. It may be linked to your genes and your brain. Social and environmental factors may play a role, too. It's more common in men. It's also more common in people who have problems with substance abuse, depression, anxiety and other mental disorders. It's also more common in people who have friends or family members who are addicted to gambling.

Symptoms

If you have this disorder, you feel an overwhelming need to gamble, and you may think about it constantly. Even when gambling makes you feel guilty, anxious and depressed, you feel powerless to cut back or stop. You may feel the need to gamble larger and larger amounts of money to get the same pleasure you once did. You may gamble more and more to try to win back money you have lost. This can cause you to borrow from friends and family. You may steal or commit other criminal acts to support your gambling.

Treatment

Treatment may involve medications and talk therapy. Support groups and continued counseling can help. Your first step is to make an appointment for treatment. Your primary care doctor or a mental health professional will find the right treatment for you.

Actor portrayals in photos

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