

What Is Online Gambling Addiction?

Online gambling addiction is a specific type of gambling addiction. This can be clinically diagnosed as gambling disorder, which affects an estimated one percent of the U.S. adult population.

Unlike “land” gambling, which involves physically traveling to a location to gamble, online gambling can be done anywhere—including within the comfort of one’s own home.

Common forms of online gambling, or e-gambling, include:

- online betting
- online poker
- mobile phone gambling
- sports betting

Being addicted to online gambling is not the same as enjoying gambling. An addiction can in part be identified by a compulsive need to gamble, despite negative consequences.

Online gambling addiction can significantly disrupt a person’s way of life, ability to work, relationships, financial security, and health.

Signs Of Online Gambling Addiction

Like drug or alcohol addiction, a behavioral addiction like online gambling addiction can be identified by certain signs, changes in behavior, and struggles related to gambling.

Signs of online gambling addiction might include:

- strong urges to gamble
- constantly thinking about online gambling
- getting a “high” from gambling activity
- lying about gambling or hiding gambling activity from loved ones
- neglecting work or school in order to gamble
- prioritizing gambling above all else
- increasing how much time is spent gambling
- frequently gambling in order to relieve stress, anxiety, or loneliness
- continuing to gamble despite negative consequences (e.g. financial problems)
- feeling restless or irritable with attempts to reduce or stop gambling
- unsuccessful attempts to cut down on or stop gambling
- relying on others for money in order to gamble as a result of financial loss

Behavioral addictions, including problematic gambling behaviors, are frequently marked by secrecy, increased isolation, irrational thinking, and feelings of shame.

Family members and friends may notice their addicted loved one withdraw, lie about their behaviors, or become openly hostile or defensive when questioned about their gambling.



★ ★ ★ ★ ★ (33)

Ohio Recovery Center 🏆

Plymouth, Massachusetts

Levels of Care:

Detox Residential Mental Health

[View Center Profile](#)

Causes Of Online Gambling Addiction

Online gambling addiction doesn’t just hurt individuals. It can often hurt families and loved ones as well. A common question loved ones have about this problem is: What is the cause?

Pinpointing the causes of online gambling addiction is an ongoing area of study, limited in part by the novelty of gambling disorder as a recognized diagnosis.

However, similar to land gambling addiction and other behavioral addictions, researchers have identified some common throughlines.

Psychological Causes Of Online Gambling Addiction

Many people turn to gambling and other addictive behaviors as a way to relieve psychological or emotional distress.

For instance, online gambling may become a way to:

relieve stress or anxiety

- distract from life stressors
- numb or cope with grief
- connect with others online
- reduce loneliness

Gambling online can become a way to escape. With increased isolation and stress due to COVID-19, for instance, some researchers have noted a rise in online gambling behaviors.

And again, while gambling by itself isn't a sign of a problem in everyone, for some it can be a compulsive and problematic habit that can cause significant distress and life problems.

Risk Factors For Online Gambling Addiction

Causes of behavioral addictions can vary from person to person.

Researchers believe direct causes may be influenced by certain personal, genetic, and biological factors that may put a person at higher risk for developing addiction.

Risk factors for online gambling addiction include:

- history of addiction
- being male
- being a younger adult
- having a disability
- history of smoking cigarettes
- [having a co-occurring mental health disorder](#)
- mood problems
- recent loss or grief
- poor impulse control
- lack of social support
- prior history of drug or alcohol abuse
- family history of addiction

What Makes Online Gambling Addictive?

Internet gambling has several characteristics, conveniences, and qualities that can make it potentially addictive for a segment of the U.S. teen and adult population.

Compared to land gambling, online gambling offers:

- 24/7 access
- anonymity
- ability to gamble at home
- accelerated speed of play
- variety of activities available at your fingertips
- no need for transportation

Furthermore, gambling can for some offer a sort of "buzz" or "high" that is similar to drugs or alcohol. It can also offer a mechanism for numbing or coping with life difficulties.

Consequences Of Online Gambling Addiction

An online gambling addiction isn't harmless. Gambling disorder can affect a person's health, relationships, finances, and ability to function normally in day-to-day life.

Risks and consequences of online gambling addiction might include:

- worsened mental health
- significant financial loss
- negative effects on work performance
- job loss
- privacy issues (e.g. stolen credit card information)
- neglected physical health
- changes in eating habits
- relationship problems
- increased isolation
- difficulty concentrating on anything beyond gambling

Addiction can become all-consuming. And because addiction is a progressive condition, the consequences of an online gambling addiction can grow worse over time.

Online Gambling Addiction And Co-Occurring Disorders

People who develop an online gambling addiction often have another mental health or substance use condition—believed to be due in part to shared risk factors.

Online gambling addiction may co-occur with:

- depression
- anxiety disorder
- alcohol use disorder
- bipolar disorder
- drug use disorder
- nicotine dependence
- self-harm behaviors
- obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)
- attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- personality disorders

Mental health disorders can put a person at risk for turning to compulsive behaviors like online gambling.

Compulsive online gambling can also worsen mental health and is associated with increased drug and alcohol consumption.

Treatment For Online Gambling Addiction

Online gambling addiction is treatable. People who develop this type of addiction do recover and can go on to live happy, healthy, and successful lives.

Behavioral Addiction Rehab Programs

While small in number, behavioral addiction rehab programs for people addicted to activities such as online gambling do exist. This includes residential rehab and outpatient programs.

What behavioral addiction rehab programs may offer:

- structure and supervision
- addiction counseling
- mental health treatment
- motivational interviewing
- behavioral therapy
- medication management
- group counseling
- family or couples counseling
- relapse prevention
- aftercare support
- employment or financial assistance

Addiction Recovery Support Groups

Virtual and in-person support groups for people with an addiction to online gambling do exist and can be helpful for people who want to address and end their compulsive gambling behaviors.

Addiction recovery support groups can offer:

- social support and connection
- others who understand your struggle
- accountability
- tips for how to reduce or stop gambling
- motivation for maintaining recovery
- resources for finding treatment

Gamblers Anonymous, and other self-help groups, can be found online or may be offered through a nearby community center or addiction treatment center.

Addiction Counseling

Counseling for online gambling addiction may be similar to that which you might seek for drug or alcohol addiction.

This can help address your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors as they concern your gambling.

Common modalities for online gambling addiction include:

- cognitive behavioral therapy
- motivational interviewing
- family therapy
- psychodynamic therapy
- group therapy

Counseling can help individuals remain accountable in their recovery, as well as offer alternative coping strategies and tips for meeting your needs without turning to gambling.

Find Treatment For Online Gambling Addiction


Overcoming an addiction to online gambling is possible. If you or a loved one is addicted, one of our trained staff members may be able to help.


Don't wait. Call our free and confidential helpline today to learn more about treatment options for online gambling addiction and to [find a treatment program that's right for you](#).

Written by the *Addiction Resource Editorial Staff*
This page does not provide medical advice. [See more](#)

[Article resources](#)

Was this Helpful?

 Yes

 No

[Home](#) > [Behavioral Addictions](#) > **Online Gambling**




Medically Reviewed by
Johnelle Smith, M.D.
on May 27, 2022



Written by
Dr. Anjali Talcherkar, Ph.D.



 Canton, Massachusetts

Bedrock Recovery Center

★★★★★ (229)


Levels of Care:

Detox Residential Mental Health

Payment Options: Insurance Accepted, Self Pay

View Center Profile



 Plymouth, Massachusetts

Ohio Recovery Center

★★★★★ (33)

Levels of Care:

Detox Residential Mental Health

Payment Options: Insurance Accepted, Self Pay

View Center Profile

People also read

[Behavioral Addictions: Causes, Signs, And Treatment Options](#)

[Porn Addiction](#)

AddictionResource.net Supports:

GENERAL DISCLAIMER: Addictionresource.net is designed for educational purposes only and is not engaged in rendering medical advice. The information provided through Addictionresource.net should not be used for diagnosing or treating a health problem or disease. It is not a substitute for professional care. If you have or suspect you may have a health problem, you should consult your health care provider. The authors, editors, producers, and contributors shall have no liability, obligation, or responsibility to any person or entity for any loss, damage, or adverse consequences alleged to have happened directly or indirectly as a consequence of material on this website. If you believe you have a medical emergency, you should immediately call 911.