

**Parents:
talk to your teens
about the risks of gambling**



Worried about your kids using alcohol, tobacco and other drugs? Most parents are, so they talk to their kids about those risk behaviors because that’s one of the things that research tells us works for prevention. However, you may not have discussed another risky behavior that more and more kids are engaging in – **gambling**. Unlike the eyeball rolling that a discussion of alcohol, drugs or tobacco will likely evoke, kids have not “heard it all” when it comes to gambling – in fact, they have probably heard nothing in school or elsewhere about the potential risks.

Kids are exposed to gambling every day. All they have to do is turn on the TV to see poker tournaments, or walk into a mini-mart or grocery store to see people buying Lottery tickets, or log onto their computer and get online gambling popup messages. Even churches and schools often use gambling for fund-raising, so the gambling message is everywhere. As responsible parents you can give your kids the full story about gambling, and this factsheet can help guide you in that process.

What are the signs of a possible gambling problem?

Some of these signs will sound very familiar – they are also “signs” of adolescence or being in the teenage years. But if they occur in an ongoing pattern, or if you have reason to be concerned about your teen’s gambling, here are some indicators to look for:

- Asking for or borrowing money from the family or unexplained debt
- Unexplained absences from school or a sudden drop in grades;
- Carries or possesses gambling materials, such as dice, playing cards, or other gambling materials;
- Says gambling is one of the best ways to make easy money;
- Uses desperate measures to get gambling money, such as stealing from family;

- Gambles with money that is suppose to be used for something else such as lunch, bus fare, etc.;
- Neglects family/friends;
- Frequent mood swings –” usually high when winning and lower when losing;
- Lies to people about gambling;
- Displays large amounts of cash and other material possessions;

Why talk about gambling?

Teens who understand gambling and its risks are less likely to develop a gambling problem. Parents can protect their kids by helping them gain this understanding. Talk directly with your teen about gambling to make sure that you are communicating exactly what you want him or her to know.

How do I bring it up?

Here are some tips for starting the conversation with your teen:

- Look for a natural way to raise the topic. For example, discuss gambling after seeing a commercial for a gambling product or casino, or after you find out that a friend has won or lost money gambling.
- Ask questions first. Find out what your child thinks and feels about gambling before offering your own opinions or giving information.
- Be patient. Several discussions may be needed before your teen understands the ideas that you want to communicate.
- When you talk with your teens about drugs or alcohol, include problem gambling in the conversation as another potentially risky activity.

Two more points to make when you talk to your teen

1. Gambling is not a way to make money. Games run by casinos, racetracks, Internet sites, and lotteries are all designed so that most people lose money in the long run. Online gaming sites are not regulated and the financial transactions involved are illegal. Games are designed to make a profit for the house, not the player. Many problem gamblers do not understand this. They believe that they are blessed with special skills or special luck that will allow them to “beat the odds.” They often “chase losses,” betting more money in the belief that they will “win back” the money they have lost. Teens need to understand that these beliefs are illogical and dangerous.

2. Gambling carries risk and problem gambling can lead to serious consequences throughout life, including the loss of huge amounts of money, destruction of a career, legal problems, and the loss of friends and family.

What to say about Internet gambling



The U.S. Federal Trade Commission is concerned about youth gambling on the Internet and wants teens and parents to understand the risks. Parents should tell their children that:

You can lose your money. Online gambling operations are in business to make a profit. They take in more money than they pay out.

You can ruin a good credit rating. Online gambling generally requires the use of a credit card. If kids rack up debt online, they could ruin their credit rating – or their parent's'.

Online gambling can be addictive. Because Internet gambling is a solitary activity, people can gamble uninterrupted and undetected for hours at a time. Gambling in social isolation and using credit to gamble may be risk factors for developing gambling problems.

Gambling is illegal for kids. Every state prohibits gambling by minors. That's why gambling sites don't pay out to kids and go to great lengths to verify the identity of any winner.

Parents should also actively monitor their children's use of any Internet sites, including those involving gambling. Although not a 100 percent guarantee of protection, there is software that blocks access to online gambling sites. See www.gamblock.com for more details.

More prevention tips for parents

- Set the example you'd like your teens to follow – if you gamble, do so 4-16 and in moderation.

- Spend quality time with your teen.
- Talk to your teen about the risks of gambling, including online gambling.
- Set consistent boundaries and consequences.
- Know their friends.
- Encourage involvement in the arts, sports or other constructive activities.
- Avoid hosting or participating in gambling parties involving young people; if you are involved in such an event make sure information about problem gambling and where to get help is provided.
- Discuss and monitor use of the internet.

Treatment is free and confidential

If you are worried that you or your teen may be having problems related to gambling, help is available. Throughout Oregon help and treatment are free, confidential, and they work.

**Call the toll-free Oregon Gambling Help Line at 877-MYLIMIT or go to
1877mylimit.org**

Free teen and parent brochure download: 1877mylimit.org – click on Resources

**Material in this section was adapted from:
www.responsiblegambling.org/articles/teensBrochure.pdf**