

If you (or a family member or friends) have a problem with gambling, please contact:

**1. Addiction Medicine Clinic, Changi General Hospital**

(For treatment of alcohol, benzodiazepine and gambling addiction only)

2 Simei Street 3  
Singapore 529889  
Consultation by appointment only. Please call: 6850 3333.

**2. National Addictions Management Service (NAMS),  
Institute of Mental Health**

Buangkok Green Medical Park  
10 Buangkok View  
Singapore 539747  
Consultation by appointment only. Please call: 6389 2200

**3. Gambling Helpline:**

1800-6-668 668

**4. Recovery Support Group Meetings**

WE CARE Community Services  
11 Kampong Bugis  
Singapore 338988  
For enquiries, please call: 6471 5346

For appointments and enquiries,  
please call the CGH Appointment Centre at  
Tel: (65) 6850 3333

**CGH Appointment Centre operating hours:**

8.30 am to 8.00 pm (Monday to Friday)  
8.30 am to 12.30 pm (Saturday & Sunday)  
Closed on Public Holidays

For more information, please visit  
<http://www.cgh.com.sg>



2 Simei Street 3 Singapore 529889  
Tel: 6788 8833 Fax: 6788 0933 [www.cgh.com.sg](http://www.cgh.com.sg)  
Reg No 198904226R

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# When Gambling Becomes An Illness

## Understanding Gambling Addiction

The **a** **b** **c**'s of Health

 Changi  
General Hospital

# When Gambling Becomes An Illness

## Understanding Gambling Addiction



### Introduction

Gambling has become a recreational activity for many people in the community. Every year in Singapore, more people are gambling on lottery tickets, horse racing, sports events, electronic gaming machines and on-line gambling.

While many gamble as a social pastime, some get addicted to gambling, just like alcohol or drugs. The “high” of winning or a temporary escapism from emotional problems, worries and frustrations are some of the reasons why people get readily hooked on gambling.

### What Is A Gambling Addiction?

Gambling addiction, also known as pathological gambling, is a disease similar to alcohol or drug addiction. However, it is a hidden disease with no physical symptoms and can cause financial ruin as well as personal and family devastation.

Pathological gamblers often have difficulty controlling their gambling behaviour. As it progresses, they increasingly spend more of their waking time thinking about gambling; at the same time the frequency and amount of money spent intensifies. They often gamble longer than intended and may gamble till the last dollar is gone. Not only earnings are used to gamble, but savings are also spent, and bills go unpaid. They may also borrow money to finance their gambling habit, occasionally from loan-sharks. In some instances they may even steal or commit other illegal acts for that purpose.

The loss of control shows in the continuation of the gambling behaviour despite serious negative consequences (mounting debts, family problems and poor job performance).

### Signs Of Pathological Gambling

- Once there is a loss of control, the gambler becomes impulsive and tries to recoup his or her losses.
- As the financial losses accumulate, there is a strong likelihood of being in debt. They will start lying to their family about the situation and will try desperately to hide his or her addiction from their family and friends.
- Gamblers will also experience an increasing sense of remorse yet powerlessness over their gambling behaviour, despite repeated yet unsuccessful attempts to quit.
- Some gamblers facing such a situation often also suffer from insomnia and depression.

### Recognising Pathological Gambling

You know someone close to you has a gambling problem when...

- An increasing period of time is spent on money gambling
- Money is borrowed to gamble
- There is an increasing or unexplained number of debts
- The person feels restless and irritable when not gambling
- The person is clocking unexplained absences from work or school
- He/she is missing important appointments or meetings

### How Can I Help?

- Talk to the person and share gently on how you feel about his/her gambling. Do not make the person feel like you are accusing or blaming.
- Listen and let him/her share about the gambling problem without passing judgement.
- Be supportive by spending time with the person and offer ways to help him/her quit gambling.

### Some Practical Ways:

- If necessary, set up or restrict bank accounts, such that two signatures are required for any withdrawals.
- Come up with a plan with him/her on ideas and ways to take back control.
- Help him/her to put up a self-exclusion order with no access to casinos.
- Do not give money to the person.
- Suggest seeking help through treatment services.
- Call a gambling helpline for advice.