



## Anyone can develop a gambling problem.

If you know someone with a gambling problem, you are not alone. Every year, almost 600,000 Nova Scotians gamble in some way or another. About 50,000 of them are at risk for developing problems; and for almost 20,000, those problems will be serious.

Developing a gambling problem is not as simple as lacking willpower or self-control.

For some, gambling is a way to cope with stress, depression, or loneliness. For others, the problem started with a big win, which gave them unrealistic expectations about gambling. Still others get caught up in a vicious cycle of trying to win back losses.

While it can happen to anyone, people who play VLTs, daily lottery draws, or gamble at a casino once a month or more are at a higher risk. In Nova Scotia, almost one-quarter of adults know someone with a current gambling problem, and one-fifth of those cite VLTs as the form of gambling used.

## Getting help costs nothing.

If the emotional and financial costs of gambling are getting too high for you or someone you care about, don't wait. Call the number below any time, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, toll free, to talk to a professional counsellor. Your call will be kept private.

### Nova Scotia Health Promotion and Protection's Problem Gambling Help Line

1-888-347-8888

1-888-347-3331 (TTY for the hearing impaired)

Contact a counsellor online at [youarenotalone.ca](http://youarenotalone.ca) (click on the Problem Gambling Help Line button).

Locate the Addiction Services office nearest you at [addictionservices.ns.ca](http://addictionservices.ns.ca) or look in the white pages under Addiction Services.

For information about financial counselling and other resources to help you, visit [youarenotalone.ca](http://youarenotalone.ca) and click on 'Resources'.

## Visit our websites.

[youarenotalone.ca](http://youarenotalone.ca)

[yellowflag.ca](http://yellowflag.ca)

# Gambling and your family

Toll free 1-888-347-8888 • 1-888-347-3331 (TTY)  
[youarenotalone.ca](http://youarenotalone.ca)



## How can it affect your child?

Having a person with a gambling problem in the house can affect a child in many ways. For example, people with gambling problems tend to spend less time with family. This can cause a child to think that Mom or Dad does not love them anymore. When people are struggling, they tend to go through mood swings, too. These emotional highs and lows can leave a child feeling confused. If the parents are fighting over money, this can frighten the child.

Your child may even develop a problem with gambling, too. Alcohol and drug use are also common ways of dealing with the depression, uncertainty, and stress that comes from living with a person with a gambling problem. These risks increase if a child gambles with their parent.



“It breaks up families; sometimes it’s a big problem.”

## What are the warning signs?

### Missing time

The person goes out and won’t say where they are going or why, misses appointments, is not at work/home/school when they should be.

### Missing money

The person stops spending money on things like entertainment/clothes/gifts the way they used to, doesn’t pay bills on time, goes to the ATM frequently to withdraw more money to gamble, borrows money and/or applies for new credit cards, sells valuables or even steals.

### Personality changes

The person loses interest in family and friends or work and hobbies, acts distracted, is moody or shows signs of stress, avoids talking about money, or is dishonest.

“My addiction caused me to lose the trust of my wife and daughter. But with the help of my family, I was able to overcome my addiction.”

## What can you do?

### Talk

Choose a time and place when you have privacy and talk calmly to the person with the problem. Describe what you have seen happening accurately and fairly. Do not accuse or blame.

Be honest with your children. When children are sheltered from the truth about the family’s problems, they tend to blame themselves. Explain that the

problems are not the child’s fault and are not the gambling parent’s fault, either. Let the child know that gambling problems can sneak up on a person and that help is available.

### Listen

The person may not agree there is a problem and may become angry, upset, or defensive. That’s OK. You’ve opened the subject, and they may be ready to talk at another time, if not then.

Let your child ask questions and vent feelings, too. Love and anger are normal. It’s OK to love the parent that is gambling, and still feel angry about it.

### Support

Whatever happens, assure the person of your emotional support and understanding. Offer to help work out a plan for cutting back and quitting. Suggest ways you can spend time together that do not involve gambling. Let the person decide the best ways to take back control of their life. Do not offer money to pay off gambling debts.

Overcoming a gambling problem is not easy and usually takes many attempts. Agree to revisit the plan as it will likely need to be revised as time goes on.

Encourage the person to call the Problem Gambling Help Line to talk to a professional counsellor. Or, if they would prefer to meet someone in person to call your local Addiction Services office.

You and your child will need support, too. Both the Problem Gambling Help Line and Addiction Services can help.

“I am becoming a better person today. There is hope. There is a way out.”

“It came to light that all his savings were gone and the credit cards were maxed. I felt betrayed and guilty for not seeing the signs and acting sooner.”

## Next steps.

If you are the spouse or partner of the person with the problem, you may need to protect yourself financially by:

- Setting up bank accounts that require two signatures for changes or withdrawals
- Having the person’s wages directly deposited to those accounts
- Cancelling any joint credit cards
- Limiting the amount the person can withdraw from the bank machine
- Getting debt counselling/management; information is available on our website at [youarenotalone.ca](http://youarenotalone.ca) and click on 'Resources'

“It will be a long road back, but we’re getting there. One step at a time. Don’t wait. Get help now. Today.”

Nova Scotia Health Promotion’s Problem Gambling Help Line is available to help you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.