



## What is healthy leisure?

When people hear the phrase healthy leisure, some think sports and fitness. Some others may think of leisure as spare or unproductive time that is only allowed when work is finished.

But there is a lot more to healthy leisure than activities that benefit our physical bodies. A balanced lifestyle makes time for both responsibilities and leisure.

The fact is, leisure activities are essential to our emotional and physical wellness. They can help us manage stress, prevent boredom, and maintain mental agility and physical dexterity. They can teach us coping skills and increase self-confidence. They can give us pure enjoyment as well as spiritual and social connection.

That's why all of us need to plan to have leisure activities in our lives.

## 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)

# Healthy Leisure

making it a part of your life

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



## Where can you find healthy leisure activities?

No matter where you live in Nova Scotia, a variety of healthy leisure activities is available nearby. Check out the bulletin boards at your local library or grocery store, or get a copy of your local municipal recreation calendar.

### Other sources

- Art (ask at supply stores about painting, sewing, knitting, pottery groups, and more)
- Continuing Education (check with your local school board, community college, or university)
- Clubs (such as the Lions, Kinsmen/Kinnettes, or Shriners)
- Culture/Heritage groups (check with your local museum or art gallery)
- Fitness (curling, dancing, swimming, skating, golf, hiking, and more may be available in your area)
- Gardening (ask at your local gardening store about clubs)
- Music (look in the Yellow Pages for a list of teachers)
- Theatre (check for local theatre groups)
- Volunteering (check with your local Community Health Board)



## Choose your leisure activities with care.

While leisure plays an important role in a healthy lifestyle, some leisure activities come with risks that need to be considered and understood.

Gambling, for example, is a leisure activity for some people. When treated carefully, it can be fun on occasion. But gambling can quickly go from being an innocent past time to a problem. While it can happen to anyone, people who play VLTs or casino slot machines once a month or more are at a higher risk of developing problems. So are people who regularly play daily lottery draws and scratch tickets, gamble online, or who already struggle with alcohol or drug use.

Some people gamble because they are bored, sad, or lonely. Unemployment or retirement, or losing a spouse can leave them with too much unstructured time and not enough to do. These people are also at a higher risk of developing problems, especially if they are on a limited budget.

“Gambling caused me to lose a lot of my friends. It became the only social life I had.”

If you are going to make gambling one of your leisure activities, it is important to take steps to protect yourself:

- Understand that gambling is entertainment, not a way to make money.

- Set a budget on how much time and money you will spend gambling. Set this budget after all of your necessary expenses such as rent, food, and transportation are accounted for.
- Know the odds – they are always in favour of the house.
- If friends and family express concern about your gambling, listen to them!
- Have a mix of other healthy leisure activities in your life, too.

## When is gambling no longer a healthy leisure activity?

Gambling can cause people to lose time with family and friends or neglect responsibilities. For some people, it can become their only form of leisure.

Gambling can cause financial loss and more. The problems it creates can become so stressful, they threaten a person’s mental and physical well-being.

This can be very confusing for many people, because gambling is advertised as an exciting, safe, and social leisure activity. The ads don’t tell us about the risks. So when people develop problems (and many people do) they feel isolated and ashamed. They may think “There is something wrong with me – other people can handle this.”

But they 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.

“My miserable marriage contributed significantly to my desire for 'escape' time at the casino, at the VLTs.”

## Next steps.

Do you need help replacing an unhealthy activity that involves gambling? Help is available.

Get a copy of *Winning Within: A Self Help Guide To Changing Gambling Behaviours*, available on the problem gambling website ([youarenotalone.ca](http://youarenotalone.ca)). Answer the questions inside to get a better understanding of your gambling, and follow the suggestions to make a plan to control it.

Call the Problem Gambling Help Line. Just to talk.

Or call your local Addiction Services office to speak to a counsellor.

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