

# Your health: How does gambling become a problem?



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Many people find it very difficult to cut back or stop gambling without assistance. The diagram below shows how easy it can be to get caught up in the 'downward spiral' of problem gambling and why it can be so hard to break the cycle...

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You can see from this diagram that problem gambling can be very complex – there are many factors that may contribute to the problem including financial problems, stress at work or home, depression and

anxiety. The diagram also illustrates that no matter what the outcome of a gambling session – whether you win or lose – it usually results in further gambling. For example you may keep playing after a win because you want to win more or return to gambling after a loss in an attempt to chase your money. Over time the problems caused by gambling can get gradually worse which can also trigger more gambling. The example below helps to illustrate this destructive downward spiral.

'Peter had never really been interested in the pokies until one day while playing with his mates he won \$200 from \$5 at his local pub. "This is easy money!" he thought. His gambling was controlled for a while but as pressure at work increased he found himself spending more time at the pub drinking and playing the pokies in order to help himself 'wind down' after a hard day.

As he spent more money he lost more and soon found himself having trouble paying his bills. He would think "If I can just double my money I'll be OK". Sometimes Peter did win and he was able to pay the bill but after a while it got to the point that even after winning he found it very hard to walk away from the machine. "I can't stop now...this machine's on a role!" he'd think to himself. Inevitably, he'd lose the lot.

Out of panic and desperation Peter started to gamble more of his wages in an attempt to chase his losses. He maxed out his credit card and applied for a personal loan to help him 'get back on track'. Now his gambling wasn't fun anymore. In fact Peter was feeling depressed and anxious. His finances were a mess, his job performance was slipping, he was starting to drink heavily. His gambling was destroying his life but he just couldn't see a way out. If he could just win that jackpot he'd be OK and then he'd quit...and the cycle would start again.'

Sometimes it can feel as though there is no way out, that there are no solutions. But there is a way out!! Through counselling and a commitment to working hard to achieve your goals it IS possible to recover from problem gambling. Seeking help is the first step. You might like to look at the [Gambling Counselling Service](#) site to find out what is available, or review the [Drug, Alcohol and Gambling Service](#) information.

We have more fact sheets on gambling: "[Do you have a gambling problem?](#)", "[Help for gambling problems](#)", "[Information for family & friends](#)".



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