

Almost everyone gambles from time to time for fun or as part of a social activity; on the races, the pokies, entering lotto, a raffle ticket or even the office footy tipping. However, gambling can become a problem for some people when they have difficulties setting limits on the time and money involved. This often leads to financial stress and relationship difficulties.

There is emerging evidence that people are more likely to have problems with gambling if they have other mental health problems, such as substance use or depression.

## When is gambling a problem?

Gambling may be becoming a problem if you are:

- Struggling to control your impulse to gamble
- Spending more time and / or money on gambling than you planned to
- Lying to people about the time/money spent on gambling
- Thinking gambling will fix your financial problems
- Struggling to pay your bills
- Prioritising gambling activities over other enjoyable or important activities such as spending time with friends or family, watching your favourite TV show, or working

## Getting help

There are effective treatments available to help people overcome their problems with gambling. One of the most effective treatments is cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). This approach recognises that the way we think and act affects the way we feel.

CBT can help you to:

- Identify gambling triggers and manage high-risk situations for gambling
- Address thinking habits that contribute to gambling problems
- Learn strategies to face gambling triggers and urges without acting on them
- Plan other enjoyable activities to do instead of gambling.

## Self-management resources

Below is a list of internet and other written resources that may help you, together with the treatment plan recommended by your doctor:

- Open Arms (<https://www.openarms.gov.au/>) has information on mental health and wellbeing, wellbeing programs, smartphone apps and information booklets.
- Gambling Help provides free face-to-face gambling counselling throughout Australia. They also provide financial counselling. Refer to their website for information on service locations: [www.gamblinghelponline.org.au](http://www.gamblinghelponline.org.au), and/or call 1800 858 858 for referral information.
- Problem Gambling ([www.problemgambling.gov.au](http://www.problemgambling.gov.au)) is an Australian Government website which provides information on the impact of gambling and resources for gamblers and their loved ones.

Open Arms - Veterans & Families counselling can be reached 24 hours a day across Australia for crisis support and counselling. Call 1800 011 046.