

The Educator

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Gambling and Gaming- What are the risks for youth?

Gambling exposure can start at a young age. Children often receive lottery tickets as gifts for birthdays or Christmas or they observe parents and other family members betting on sporting events or playing bingo for money. Ads on TV for the area casinos, CT lottery, and now Keno are pervasive. Data in our region shows that between 15 and 22% of our high school youth have gambled (bought a lottery ticket, bet on a sports team or a card game) once or more in the last 30 days. The Search Institute defines this as a risky behavior.



Most people gamble socially- it can be a form of entertainment with friends. But for some, gambling can lead to an addiction disorder. Problem gambling or disordered gambling can lead to problems with relationship and friendships, poor performance in school, depression and suicidal ideation, and substance misuse. In the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), gambling disorder is included in a new category of behavioral addictions. The National Council on Problem Gambling's studies show that between 2-7% of young people experience a gambling disorder and an additional 10% experience problems related to gambling.

What is Gambling?

The act of risking something of value, including money and property, on an activity that has an uncertain outcome.

It is not a risk-free activity

What can parents do to safeguard their kids?

Signs of Problem

Gambling:

- * Spending more time and money than intended
- * Borrowing or taking money from others to gamble
- * Desperate to win back lost money

Model responsible behavior- parental gambling is a major risk factor for youth problem gambling

Knowledge is power- know the risks. See page 2 of this Educator for links to more information on problem gambling

Talk to your kids! It is never too early to talk to your kids about gambling. Research shows that the earlier in life someone places a bet, the more likely he/she is to develop a gambling problem later in life. (The same holds true for early use of substances!)

Seek help when needed. Treatment is available. You can call the confidential toll-free **Problem Gambling Helpline 1-888-789-7777** 24/7. Or Text "**CTGAMB**" to **53342**

Gaming

Playing video games is a common pastime for youth. Gaming has become a mostly healthy part of youth culture. Studies have shown that gaming can be a healthy positive recreational activity. Social benefits are mastering certain skills, a feeling of achievement outside of the classroom, and respect from peers.

According to 2017 Common Sense Media studies:

- 66% of tweens aged 8 to 12 play video games for an average of 2 hours per day
- 56% of teens ages 13 to 17 play video games for an average of 2.5 hours per day
- Boys typically play video games more often than girls
- Over 80% of both tweens and teens have a gaming console
- Young children aged 2 to 4 play for 21 minutes per day, and those aged 5 to 8 play for 42 minutes per day



There are many kinds of video games kids can play- consoles like PlayStation or X-Box, Hand-held like Nintendo 3DS, PC games, Mobile Apps, Virtual Reality (VR) gaming like HTC Vive and Oculus Rift, and Augmented Reality (AR) including Pokémon Go. Some popular game genres include first-person shooters (Counter Strike, Call of Duty), Battle Royale (Fortnite, PUBG), Role-Play (The Witcher3, World of Warcraft), and Sports (NBA, FIFA).

Other popular gaming includes E-Sports where professional gamers compete, and Fantasy Sports. Many gamers livestream their gameplay to a public audience using YouTube.

Every game has a rating set by the Entertainment Software Rating Board.

Talk to your kids and set rules!

- < Preview games, review ratings together and decide what you are comfortable with as a family
- < Set daily time limits. The American Academy of Pediatrics guidelines for screen time is not more than 2 hours per day. That includes all screens- computer, phone, TV, and games
- < Make an agreement that gaming can occur only after homework and chores are completed
- < Limit gaming before bedtime
- < Learn about the risks of livestreaming and interacting with others online
- < Discuss virtual spending and set limits. Be in charge of your credit card and review statements each month
- < Encourage other recreational activities

Signs of gaming problems or gaming addiction may include:

- * Thinking about games even when involved in other activities
- * Unable to stop or reduce time
- * Disruptive to other duties like homework and chores
- * Struggling with sleep or schoolwork
- * Anger, depression or anxiety
- * Losing interest in other activities
- * Risking or losing a friendship or opportunity because of gaming

Virtual Spending, “Loot Boxes”, “Skins”...

Virtual weapons, outfits for game avatars (Fortnite Skins) and gems to help improve performance can all be purchased online.

Kids may not realize they are spending real money; they may believe the transactions are fake because playful symbols are used to represent the money exchange.

“Loot Boxes” are digital grab bags- the trick is that the player doesn’t know what’s inside. It is considered a gambling activity because the outcome is unknown.

In-game spending globally last year totaled more than \$93 billion, up from nearly \$41 billion five years ago.

Check out this PSA made by youth from the Step Up Naugy Coalition:

<https://youtu.be/ZNAoYcrltpk>

Sources: Search Institute Attitudes and Behaviors surveys
Problem Gambling Services, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling
CT Gambling Awareness Community and Leadership Team
Common Sense Media, Center on Media and Child Health, Fuller Youth Institute, Wall Street Journal

For more information and resources:

Problem Gambling Services, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services:

<https://www.ct.gov/dmhas/cwp/view.asp?a=2902&q=335212>

The CT Council on Problem Gambling (CCPG) www.ccpg.org

Western CT Coalition www.wctcoalition.org 203-743-7741