



Better Safe!



WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR FAMILY'S SAFETY

You & Gambling

THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A SAFE BET



Anyone who has bought a lottery ticket or played bingo has gambled. Gambling is any game of chance in which money changes hands. It's common in most cultures around the world. Many people enjoy gambling as recreation without causing harm to themselves or others. Yet some people can't control their impulse to gamble, even when it takes a terrible toll on their lives.

For these gamblers and their families, researchers have been making progress in several areas. Scientists are learning why people have problems with gambling: how common it is, what goes on inside the gambler's brain, who is at risk and what kinds of treatment can help.

When Does It Become A Problem?

Problem gambling is defined by some researchers as gambling that causes harm to the gambler or someone else, in spite of a desire to stop. Between 2% and 4% of Americans struggle with this condition. Problem gambling can progress to a recognized psychiatric diagnosis called **pathological gambling**.

Pathological gambling may affect from 0.4% to 2% of Americans. "Pathological gambling comes with a constellation of problems that contribute to chaos," says Dr. Donald Black of the University of Iowa. "It's associated with worse physical health, excessive smoking, excessive drinking, not exercising, not seeing primary care doctors and worse dental care. It also fuels depression, family dysfunction, crime, bankruptcy and suicide."

Together, pathological and problem gambling may affect up to 5% of Americans. That number may rise, though. Laws in many states are creating more options for legal gambling, and internet gambling is becoming more common.

Still, gambling is often done in family settings, and condoned or encouraged by parents. And the younger you start, the more likely you are to get into trouble later on. About 3% to 8% of adolescents have a problem with gambling.

Dr. John Welte of the University of Buffalo has found that, across the lifespan, gambling problems are even more common than alcohol dependence. They are also much more common in males, in young people, and in people who live in relatively poor neighborhoods. "That's not true of the prevalence of alcoholism," says Welte. "Alcoholism is much more democratic. So think about motives for gambling. People are hoping that winning will improve their lot. That makes them more vulnerable to developing a gambling problem."

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Pathological Gambling: Risk, Treatments & Prognosis

Anyone who gambles runs the risk of developing a gambling addiction. When gambling becomes a problem—or if your gambling progresses to pathological gambling—you face several risks and complications.

Complications may include:

- Alcohol and drug abuse problems
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Financial, social, and legal problems (including bankruptcy, divorce, job loss, time in prison)
- Heart attacks (from the stress and excitement of gambling)
- Suicide attempts

Getting the right treatment can help prevent many of these problems.

Treatment

Treatment for people with pathological gambling begins with recognizing the problem. Pathological gamblers often deny they have a problem or need treatment.

Most people with pathological gambling only get treated when other people pressure them.

Treatment options include:

- Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)
- Self-help support groups, such as Gamblers Anonymous. Gamblers Anonymous is a 12-step program similar to Alcoholics Anonymous. Practices used to treat other types of addiction, such as substance abuse and alcohol dependence, can also be helpful in treating pathological gambling.
- A few studies have been done on medications for treating pathological gambling. Early results suggest that antidepressants and opioid antagonists may help treat the symptoms of pathological gambling. However, it is not yet clear which people will respond to medications.

Like alcohol or drug addiction, pathological gambling is a long-term disorder that tends to get worse without treatment. Even with treatment, it's common to start gambling again (relapse). However, people with pathological gambling can do very well with the right treatment.

Signs Of Problem Gambling

Are you troubled by gambling? Seek help if:

- You always think about gambling.
- You gamble with money you need for other things.
- You keep gambling even though you may feel bad afterward.
- You get nervous when you try to quit.
- You need to gamble with increasing amounts of money to get the same buzz.
- You lose money, but you return to "chase" losses by gambling even more.
- You spend work, school or family time gambling.
- You tell lies to hide your gambling.
- You lose a job, educational opportunity or relationship because of gambling.
- You find that no matter how hard you try, you can't stop.



Digging A Vegetarian Diet

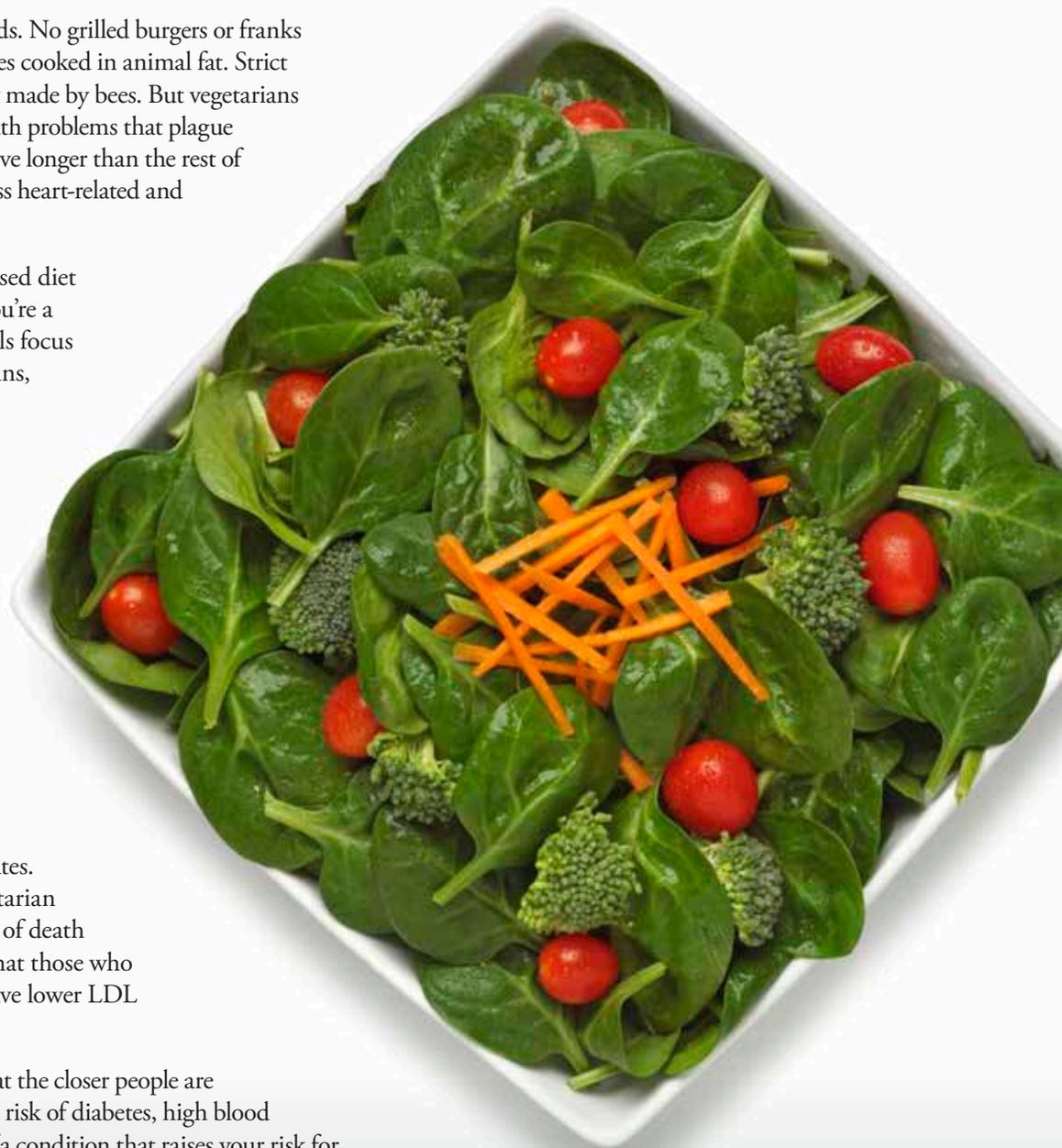
Vegetarians miss out on lots of foods. No grilled burgers or franks at picnics. No holiday turkey or fries cooked in animal fat. Strict vegetarians may even forego honey made by bees. But vegetarians also tend to miss out on major health problems that plague many Americans. They generally live longer than the rest of us, and they're more likely to bypass heart-related and other ailments.

The fact is, eating a more plant-based diet can boost your health, whether you're a vegetarian or not. Vegetarian meals focus on fruits and vegetables, dried beans, whole grains, seeds and nuts. By some estimates, about 2% of the U.S. adult population follows this type of diet.

The Delicious Benefits Of A Vegetarian Diet

Vegetarian diets tend to have fewer calories, lower levels of saturated fat and cholesterol, and more fiber, potassium and vitamin C than other eating patterns. Vegetarians tend to weigh less than meat-eaters, and to have lower cancer rates. Evidence also suggests that a vegetarian diet is associated with a lower risk of death from certain heart diseases, and that those who follow a vegetarian diet tend to have lower LDL "bad" cholesterol levels.

To date, researchers have found that the closer people are to being vegetarian, the lower their risk of diabetes, high blood pressure and metabolic syndrome (a condition that raises your risk for heart disease and stroke).



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Digging A Vegetarian Diet

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Experts generally agree that vegetarians who eat a wide variety of foods can readily meet all their body's needs for nutrients. "At any stage of life, you should be able to eat a healthy diet by consuming vegetarian foods. But it does take a little planning," says Rachel Fisher, a registered dietitian involved in nutrition research at the National Institutes of Health.

Vegetarians need to be sure they take in enough iron, calcium, zinc and vitamin B12. Studies show that most vegetarians do get enough, in part because so many cereals, breads and other foods are fortified with these nutrients. "Vegans in particular need to be certain to get enough vitamin B12 and omega-3 fatty acids," says Fisher. Omega-3—found in fish, flax seed, walnuts and canola oil—is important for heart health and vision.

Some vegetarians take dietary supplements to make sure they're getting everything they need. It's a good idea to talk to a registered dietitian or a health professional if you're a vegetarian or thinking of becoming one. Whether you're a vegetarian or not, you can ultimately benefit from the high fiber, low fat and rich nutrients of a vegetarian diet.



Tips For A Vegetarian Diet

- Meet protein needs by eating a variety of nuts, eggs or dairy foods.
- Snack on unsalted nuts and use them in salads or main dishes.
- Vitamin B12 is naturally found only in animal products. Choose fortified foods such as cereals or soy products, or take a vitamin B12 supplement if you don't eat animal products.
- Get calcium from dairy products and calcium-fortified soy milk, breakfast cereals or orange juice.
- Beans and peas have many nutrients and are recommended for everyone, vegetarians and non-vegetarians alike.
- Try using a variety of spices and herbs to make things interesting.
- Don't overcook your vegetables, or they might lose some of their valuable nutrients.

It's Time To See The Importance Of Eye Health



You may barely notice the changes at first. Maybe you've found yourself reaching more often for your glasses to see up close. You might have trouble adjusting to glaring lights or reading when the light is dim. You may even have put on blue socks thinking they were black. These are some of the normal changes to your eyes and vision as you age.

As more Americans head toward retirement and beyond, scientists expect the number of people with age-related eye problems to rise dramatically. You can't prevent all age-related changes to your eyes. But you can take steps to protect your vision and reduce your risk for serious eye disease in the future. Effective treatments are now available for many disorders that may lead to blindness or visual impairment. You can also learn how to make the most of the vision you have.

Signs Of Eye Aging

The clear, curved lens at the front of your eye may be one of the first parts of your eyes to show signs of age. The lens bends to focus light and form images on the retina at the back of your eye. This flexibility lets you see at different distances—up close or far away. But the lens hardens with age. The change may begin as early as your 20s, but it can come so gradually it may take decades to notice.

Eventually, age-related stiffening and clouding of the lens affects just about everyone. You'll have trouble focusing on up-close objects, a condition called presbyopia. Anyone over age 35 is at risk for presbyopia.

Cloudy areas in the lens, called cataracts, are another common eye problem that comes with age. More than 22 million Americans have cataracts. By age 80, more than half of us will have had them. Some cataracts stay small and have little effect on eyesight, but others become large and interfere with vision. Symptoms include:

- Blurriness
- Difficulty seeing well at night
- Lights that seem too bright
- Faded color vision

There are no specific steps to prevent cataracts, but tobacco use and exposure to sunlight raise your risk of developing them. Cataract surgery is a safe and common treatment that can restore good vision.

The passage of time can also weaken the tiny muscles that control your eye's pupil size. The pupil becomes smaller and less responsive to changes in light. That's why people in their 60s need three times more light for comfortable reading than those in their 20s. Smaller pupils make it more difficult to see at night.

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It's Time To See The Importance Of Eye Health

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Think You Don't Need An Eye Exam? Think Again!

If you're not convinced you should have regular eye exams, consider that some of the more serious age-related eye diseases—like glaucoma, age-related macular degeneration (AMD) and diabetic eye disease—may have no warning signs or symptoms in their early stages.

A Quick Look At Eye Diseases

Glaucoma

Glaucoma comes from increased fluid pressure inside the eye that damages the optic nerve. Glaucoma can slowly steal your peripheral vision. You may not notice it until it's advanced. It can be treated with prescription eye drops, lasers or surgery. If not treated, however, it can lead to vision loss and blindness.

Age-Related Macular Degeneration

AMD causes gradual loss of vision in the center of your eyesight and is the leading cause of blindness in Americans over age 65. Scientists have found that people who eat diets rich in green, leafy vegetables—such as kale and spinach—or fish are less likely to have advanced AMD.

Diabetic Eye Disease

Diabetic eye disease, another leading cause of blindness, can damage the tiny blood vessels inside the retina. Keeping your blood sugar under control can help prevent or slow the problem.

The only way to detect these serious eye diseases before they cause vision loss or blindness is through a comprehensive dilated eye exam. Your eye care professional will put drops in your eyes to enlarge, or dilate, the pupils and then look for signs of disease. Having regular comprehensive eye care gives your doctor a chance to identify a problem very early on and then treat it. Annual eye exams are especially important if you have diabetes.

Protect Your Vision

- Have a comprehensive eye exam each year after age 50.
- Stop smoking.
- Eat a diet rich in green, leafy vegetables and fish.
- Exercise.
- Maintain normal blood pressure.
- Control diabetes if you have it.
- Wear sunglasses and a brimmed hat any time you're outside in bright sunshine.
- Wear protective eyewear when playing sports or doing work around the house that may cause eye injury.



Keep Your Bones **Strong & Healthy**

Our bones are alive. We might not think of them that way—but to keep themselves strong and usable, our bones are always changing.

As you get older, your bones may be at increased risk for osteoporosis (oss-tee-oh-pore-OH-sis), when the bones become weak, fragile and more likely to break. And once they break, they take longer to heal. This can be both painful and expensive.

Current estimates suggest that around 10 million people in the U.S. have osteoporosis, and 34 million more have low bone mass, which places them at increased risk.

The Silent Disease

Osteoporosis is a “silent” disease. You may not realize you have it until a sudden strain, twist or fall causes a broken bone (also called a “fracture”). With osteoporosis, even a minor tumble can be serious, requiring surgery and hospitalization.

If you have osteoporosis, you can get a broken bone even though you haven't fallen—by shoveling snow, for example. A spinal fracture, a break in one of the small bones in your back, may be subtle and go unnoticed. Or it may cause back pain, which you shouldn't ignore.

Research shows that childhood is the best time to build up bone tissue. Most bone is built by age 18 in girls and 20 in boys.



Healthy Lifestyle Habits = Healthy Bones

You can build and protect your bones with healthy lifestyle habits:

Start With A Well-Balanced Diet Rich In Calcium And Vitamin D

Most of our bone is made of a rigid protein framework. Calcium (a mineral) adds strength and hardens that framework. Vitamin D helps the intestine absorb calcium.

Calcium is found in many foods, but the most common source for Americans is milk and other dairy products. One 8-ounce glass of milk provides about one-third of the recommended intake for younger children and about one-fourth of the recommended intake for teens.

Your body makes vitamin D in the skin when you're out in the sun. Some people get all they need from sunlight, but others need to take vitamin D pills. Talk to your doctor to find out how much calcium and vitamin D you should get each day.

Get Regular Physical Activity

Physical activity is also important for building bone strength. The more work bones do, the stronger they get. That's why it's so important for kids to run and play.

There is good evidence that you can build the best skeleton by doing physical activity in childhood: jumping rope, playing basketball and running around. But no matter what your age, it's never too late to promote bone health. Increase your load-bearing exercise, like walking, and make good food choices, rich in calcium and vitamin D.

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Keep Your Bones Strong & Healthy

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Bone Health: Women Take Special Note

Women are more likely to have osteoporosis and related fractures, particularly Caucasian and Asian women. Osteoporosis becomes more common as you get older. Low body weight can also increase your risk. And so can certain medications (such as steroids) and certain diseases and conditions (such as anorexia nervosa, rheumatoid arthritis, gastrointestinal diseases, thyroid disease and depression).

It's recommended that all women over the age of 65 should have a bone mineral density test. The test uses a tiny amount of radiation to look at how dense your bones are. It isn't painful, and there's usually no need to undress.

So ask your doctor about osteoporosis. Remember that osteoporosis remains silent—until there's a fracture. A big red flag is when a person over age 50 has a fracture of any kind. If you do have osteoporosis, medications can help.

Your bones are so important. They support you and allow you to move. They protect your heart, lungs and brain from injury. They're a storehouse for vital minerals you need to live. Your bones take care of you in so many ways. Learn to take care of them.

Bone Health Tips

Research shows that there are several ways to take care of your bones:

- Get enough calcium and vitamin D in your diet at every age.
- Be physically active.
- Reduce hazards in your home that could increase your risk of falling.
- Talk with your doctor about medicines you are taking that could increase your risk for osteoporosis.
- If you are over 50 and break a bone, ask your doctor to screen you for osteoporosis.

