

Kids are gambling earlier than you might think.



Kids and gambling.

Did you know that 43% of kids surveyed in BC say they've gambled in the past 12 months? In fact, kids are more likely to gamble than do drugs, smoke cigarettes or drink alcohol, yet they're nowhere near as educated on the risks associated with gambling.

What is gambling?

Simply put, gambling is when you wager money, or something of value, on a game or activity based on chance. In most gambling situations, the odds aren't in your favour. This means over time you're likely to lose more often than you'll win.

Gambling can take many forms, like playing poker with friends, betting on a sporting event or even redeeming a lottery ticket received as a gift.

You can bet with almost anything including money, computer equipment, bikes, video games, etc.

What's the big deal about gambling?

Imagine you've come home to find your kids smoking, drinking, or doing drugs. There's no doubt you'd be concerned and upset. However research shows that many parents don't see their kids' involvement in a poker game either at home or with friends as a problem. Likewise, kids see gambling being depicted in movies, online and on TV as a glamorous and exciting pastime—even as a lucrative career.

But there is cause for concern. The problem is that for young developing minds, the part of the brain responsible for risk assessment isn't fully developed, and won't be until well after adolescence. Of course, not all kids are the same—some are more attracted to risk-taking behaviour than others. They perceive activities like gambling as exciting and therefore often ignore potential negative outcomes. With a growing body of research showing that kids who start gambling early have a greater risk of developing a gambling problem, it's important to talk to kids now about the risks involved with gambling.

Parents as role models.

Despite what you may think, most kids say that parents are the first people they look to for advice and guidance. So by arming yourself with the facts about gambling and starting conversations early, your kids will be better prepared to make responsible choices.

Talking to kids about gambling.

- Try bringing up the conversation naturally, like when watching poker on TV or during an announcement about the latest lottery winner.
- Pose hypothetical questions to get the conversation going. Ask them how they might feel about betting with one of their prized possessions and how they'd feel about losing it.

Let your kids know what your expectations are about gambling. Then, explain your reasons.

Talking to kids (continued).

- Ask lots of questions and listen to their responses. It's a good way to find out what they know and to dispel any misconceptions they might have.
- Talk to them about the difference between skill-based games (like video games/sports) where practice pays off versus gambling where the outcome is often random and based on chance.

Actions speak louder than words. By demonstrating responsible gambling habits, you'll help your kids make more informed decisions.

Help if you need it.

Visit GameSense.ca for more tips on starting a conversation with kids about gambling, what to do if you see signs of a problem and links to other valuable resources.

If you'd like to prevent your kids from accessing online gambling sites, visit GameSense.ca and download the free **BetStopper** software.

For problem gambling resources, please call the **BC Problem Gambling Help Line: 1-888-795-6111**

Find out more...