

NPGAW

Sports Related Problem Gambling – Who is at Risk?

Anyone can develop a gambling problem – young, old, male, female, rich or poor. All games of chance are a potential threat to a person at risk for gambling addiction. However, sports gambling is becoming more invasive in today's society and is reaching younger audiences. The 2010 National Annenberg Survey of Youth showed that sports betting is the most popular form of gambling among youth 14 - 22.

Nearly a quarter of adolescent males bet on sports in an average month. According to the NCAA, 92% of male college athletes reported that they started gambling [on sports or any other gambling] in high school or earlier. Many students are first introduced to wagering on sports by completing an NCAA tournament bracket or buying a Super Bowl square, suggesting these forms of gambling may serve as a gateway to more expensive and dangerous forms of betting, according to a study conducted by Tim Otteman of *US News & World Report*. The NCAA estimates that 1 in 10 Americans will complete a tournament bracket, and CNBC estimates that \$6-12 billion is wagered on March Madness.

While betting on a tournament or football game does not automatically cause a problem or put someone on the path towards addiction, its popularity does create the need for education and encouraging responsible gambling practices.

Much of the recent research shows a higher interest, and thereby higher risk, to males and youth.

According to the International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviors at McGill University, boys develop more gambling problems than girls because they are more competitive and enjoy feeling important when they win. Also, boys are more susceptible to develop gambling problems than girls because they participate in gambling activities that are more problematic, such as sports betting. They believe that because they know all the teams and the players, they have a good chance of winning their bet. Many teenagers have developed a gambling problem due to their participation in betting on sports events.

Athletes are at a high risk for sports gambling for many reasons including unreasonable expectation of winning, competitive personalities, need for action and excitement, ability to play through pain and perception of social norms. Some other risk factors of problem gambling in general include being an athlete, belief in one's own skill, racial and ethnic minorities are at a higher risk of developing a gambling addiction, easy access to money, and having a family history of addiction.

National Problem Gambling Awareness Week is an ideal time to raise awareness of problem gambling and responsible gaming. While anyone is at risk, there are specific risk factors to be aware of. Know the risk factors, and know your limits before you place a bet.