

IT'S OUR BUSINESS

Is drinking, using drugs or gambling affecting my work?

- **ALCOHOL**
- **DRUGS and**
- **GAMBLING**

in the Workplace



**Alberta Health
Services**

Are you concerned that your gambling, or your use of alcohol or other drugs, might be affecting your work? You may wonder: What are the signs that my work is being affected? How much is too much? What does a problem look like? How do I know if I'm addicted or not? If you think you have a problem, you might not know what to do about it or where to turn for help. This brochure will try to answer some of your questions and tell you where you can find help.

What are the signs that my work is being affected?

Here is a checklist of common indicators that your gambling or use of alcohol or other drugs is affecting your work:

- ___ I miss work because I am using/gambling or when I am sick, hung over or stressed because of my activities.
- ___ I arrive at work late or leave early because of my use/gambling.
- ___ I have showed up not fit for work and been sent for an alcohol/drug test or sent home.
- ___ I have tested positive for alcohol or drugs following a workplace drug test.
- ___ I have used alcohol/drugs or gambled while at work.
- ___ My co-workers or supervisors are expressing concern about changes they have seen in me or about my use/gambling.
- ___ My work performance is suffering because of my alcohol/drug use or gambling—I do less, make more mistakes, miss deadlines or am unsafe at work.
- ___ I have trouble concentrating or remembering instructions.
- ___ A supervisor has talked to me about my declining work performance.
- ___ I have been involved in incidents or accidents at work because of my use/gambling.
- ___ I have had conflicts—which I think are related to my gambling or use of alcohol/drugs—with co-workers, customers or clients.
- ___ Others who are concerned about my use/gambling are calling my workplace—spouse, creditors, bookies, etc.

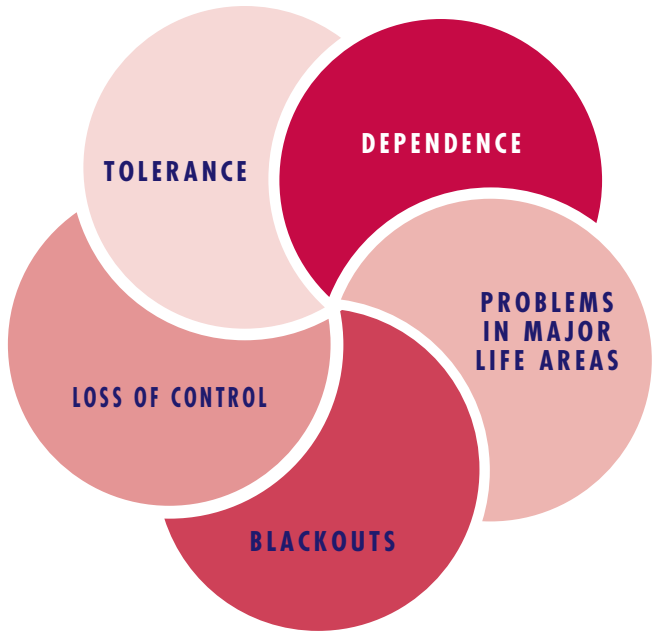
How much is too much?

Problems with alcohol/drugs or gambling may occur quickly or may gradually develop over time. Some people will drink, use drugs or gamble daily. Others will use in a binge pattern: for example, using heavily on weekends or just after payday.

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There are five factors that can help you to decide whether or not you have a problem with alcohol, drugs or gambling.

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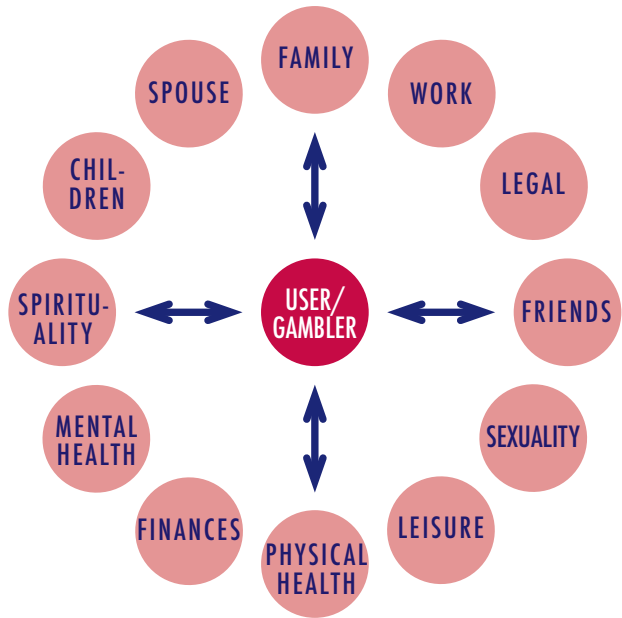
1. Am I experiencing problems in my life as a result of my alcohol or drug use or gambling?

One of the most important indicators of an alcohol, drug or gambling problem is when a person continues to use or gamble despite the problems it creates.

You might have a problem if you are experiencing difficulties in one or more of the major areas of your life. The following checklist will help you to decide.

- ___ I have trouble getting along with my spouse or children—they are concerned and upset about my alcohol/drug use or gambling.
- ___ I am spending more time with others who drink, use or gamble as much as I do. I am withdrawing from old friends who use less.
- ___ My friends are expressing concern about my use/gambling.
- ___ I am experiencing health problems as a result of my use/gambling (losing or gaining weight, ulcers, stomach problems, changes in sleep patterns, etc.)—a doctor has told me I need to cut down or stop.
- ___ I sometimes have *blackouts* after drinking/using (times when I later can't remember what I did or said).
- ___ I have trouble functioning sexually or I am engaging in sexual behaviour that I would not engage in while sober.

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- I have money problems, mounting debt, creditors calling—I borrow money or am not truthful about how much I actually spend.
- I have had legal problems as a result of my alcohol/drug use or gambling.
- I feel guilt or remorse as a result of my activities.
- I experience mood swings, depression, self-hatred, or thoughts of suicide.
- I use or gamble to escape, numb feelings or “get away” from things.
- I am experiencing problems at work as a result of my alcohol/drug use or gambling.

2. Am I developing tolerance?

With regular use over time, your body adapts to the presence of alcohol or another drug in its system.

You may be experiencing increasing tolerance if it takes more alcohol (or more of the drug) for you to feel good or get high than it used to. For example, you might have gotten high on four or five beers in the past and now it takes seven.

If you're a gambler, it's a little different. You may find yourself beginning to place larger, more frequent bets in order to get the same level of excitement.

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3. Am I dependent on alcohol, drugs or gambling?

Dependence occurs when a person becomes “hooked” on alcohol, drugs or gambling.

This can happen physically or psychologically.

Physical dependence occurs when your body becomes so used to alcohol or a particular drug that it cannot function normally without it. If you are physically addicted to alcohol or other drugs, you will most likely experience some form of withdrawal when you stop taking the substance.

Withdrawal can range from mild discomfort to life-threatening reactions. For example, a hangover from alcohol is a mild form of withdrawal while severe alcohol withdrawal can include hallucinations and seizures.

For problem gamblers, withdrawal is not so extreme, but it does occur. You might become restless and irritable when unable to gamble.

Psychological dependence occurs when a person’s thoughts, emotions and activities become centred on alcohol use, drug use or gambling. You might experience a lot of cravings to use or gamble. You might believe that your activities would be less satisfying or even impossible without the use of alcohol, drugs or gambling.

4. Am I experiencing blackouts?

A blackout is a loss of memory of events that happened while drinking or using drugs. A person may wake up at home, for example, but not remember how they got there. Although not all people will have blackouts, they do commonly occur in those who are experiencing signs of physical dependence.

5. Am I experiencing loss of control over my drinking, drug use or gambling?

An important factor in determining whether or not someone has a problem with alcohol, other drugs, or gambling has to do with whether or not they can “control” their use. For example, if you decide to have two beers after work, you are able to stop after having those two drinks. If you decide to play \$20.00 in the VLT, you are able to quit when it’s gone. When you are using alcohol or drugs or gambling, if you are unable to stop when you want to or had planned to, you may have a problem.

If you are concerned that you might have a problem with alcohol, other drugs or gambling, it’s important to look at all five factors. Certainly not everyone who has a substance abuse or gambling problem experiences difficulty in all five areas. Alcohol, drug and gambling problems come in many shapes and sizes—they are as unique as the individual experiencing them.

If you have answered “yes” in any of the five areas, it may be useful to talk with someone who can help you take a closer look at your use/gambling and the impact it is having on your life. This is not something you have to do by yourself.

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Where to get help

For more information and to find an addiction services office near you, please call the 24-hour Helpline at 1-866-332-2322.

You can also get help from the following places:

- the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) at your workplace
- health professionals—your doctor, an occupational health nurse, a health and wellness representative
- workplace resources such as human resources personnel, managers, supervisors, union representatives or workplace peer support team members
- 12-step support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous or Gamblers Anonymous (available in most communities, listed in your telephone book)

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