

## Adolescent Gambling

Adolescents are two to four times more likely than adults to become problem gamblers. (Source: International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviours, 2004)

Poker playing is driving a gambling craze among today's tweens and teens.

The game's newfound glamor is due, in large part, to the immensely popular World Poker Tour TV show with its high stakes and celebrity players.

Some experts worry that this increase in youth poker playing could lead to different forms of gambling and possibly compulsive gambling later in life.

Technically savvy young people are turning increasingly to Internet gambling sites, which are easy, convenient and anonymous.

In a 2005 Media Awareness Network (MNet) survey of students' Internet habits, 23 per cent of male students in Grades 10 and 11 report having visited a gambling site in the past school year.

Most gambling sites only require a major credit card, which many university and even high school students possess.

Although Internet gambling by minors is illegal in Canada, enforcement can be difficult.

Young people often conceal their age and location when registering on Internet gaming sites.

In a 2002 study of 100 betting sites, the U.S. Federal Trade Commission found that 20 per cent of the sites posted no warning about age restrictions and most had no effective mechanisms to prevent minors from entering.

Kids today don't have to look far to find Internet gambling sites.

Banner ads and pop-ups for casinos are everywhere on the Web, and often appear on sites popular with teens and even younger children.

Many kids use sports betting sites where weekly winners are ranked and earn prizes.

These sites are not considered to be hosting 'real' gambling activities because visitors don't play for cash.

Nevertheless, kids learn how to bet on these sites, which also often link to online casinos.

"Neopets.com," an immensely popular site

with pre-teens in Canada, allows visitors to create pets and then collect 'Neopoints' to spend on them.

The games area offers a section called 'luck / chance' where kids can play gambling-based games such as 'Neopoker,' 'JubJub Blackjack' and 'Diceroo.'

Why would a site aimed at eight- to twelve-year-olds promote gambling style games?

The answer is "grooming."

The betting industry is one of the Web's biggest money-makers, and predictions are that Internet gambling will increase tenfold over the next few years.

Grooming activities help create a generation of kids who find gambling an attractive and familiar online activity.

### Tips for parents

Discuss gambling and its potential risks with your kids.

Examine your own attitudes and habits around gambling. Remember, you are the most important role model for your kids.

Know where your kids are going online and what they are doing.

Establish clear rules about what online games your children can play and keep Internet-connected computers in an open area, never in your children's bedrooms.

Remind your kids that it is illegal for them to gamble online.

Parents should convey to their kids the following risks associated with online gambling:

### **You can lose your money**

Online gambling operations are in business to make a profit.

They take in more money than they pay out.

### **You can ruin a good credit rating**

Online gambling generally requires the use of a credit card.

If kids rack up debts online, they could ruin their credit rating - or their parents'.

### **Online gambling can be addictive**

Internet gambling is a solitary activity.

People can gamble uninterrupted and undetected for hours at a time.

Gambling in isolation and using credit may lead to addictive gambling patterns.

## **Gambling is illegal for kids**

Canada prohibits gambling by minors.

That's why gambling sites don't pay out to kids and go to great lengths to verify the age of any winner.

### Things to Watch For

- Is your child often late for school?
- Is your child on the computer for long unexplained periods?
- Does your child neglect responsibilities, and make excuses?
- Has your child withdrawn from family and friends?
- Are credit card debts increasing?
- Does your child talk about gambling all the time?
- Does your child lie about gambling?