

Gambling and Medications

Persons experiencing gambling-related problems tend to have higher rates of poor to fair general health. This could be due to neglecting their health where gambling is seen as more important than physician visits (time away from gambling activity), co-pays and not filling medications because they would rather gamble the money. Often the gambler will engage in alcohol, smoking and substance use while gambling which can lead to other health issues such as anxiety and depression. This anxiety and depression may become worse as their gambling problem escalates.

The three main approaches to treating Disordered Gambling involve Mutual Aid, Psychotherapy and Medications. When one is experiencing the excitement of gambling, a neurotransmitter called dopamine (which is a chemical messenger) is released in the body and passes information from one neuron to the next. This is what triggers the behaviors and emotions while gambling.

While there are medications that appear to be effective in treating Disordered Gambling, there are medications that may cause uncontrollable urges to gamble or may lead to Disordered Gambling.

Medications (Opioid Antagonists, Serotonin-Specific Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs), Antidepressants and Mood Stabilizers) that may be effective in treating Disordered Gambling are:

- Naltrexone (Opioid Antagonists)
- Nalmefene also known as Revex (Opioid Antagonists)
- Paroxetine also known as Paxil (SSRIs)
- Fluvoxamine also known as Luvox (SSRIs)
- Citalopram also known as Celexa (SSRIs)
- Escitalopram also known as Lexapro (SSRIs)
- Nefazodone (Antidepressant)
- Bupropion also known as Wellbutrin (Antidepressant)
- Lithium (Mood Stabilizer)
- Carbamazepine (Mood Stabilizer)
- Valproate (Mood Stabilizer)
- Topiramate (Mood Stabilizer)

**Opioid Antagonists are usually used to treat patients with substance use disorders. SSRIs are usually used to treat patients with depression. **

Antipsychotic Receptor Agonists (mental health medications) that may cause uncontrollable urges to gamble:

- Aripiprazole also known as Abilify, Abilify Maintena and Aristada
- Effexor
- Cymbalta
- Rexulti (brexpiprazole)

*Per the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) “the compulsive behavior ceases once the users stop using the medications or when the dose is lowered.”

Dopamine Receptor Agonists (medications which treat Parkinson’s disease (PD) and Restless Leg Syndrome (RLS)) may lead to Disordered Gambling:

- Rotigotine-also known as Neupro (PD/RSL)
- Pergolide- also known as Permax and Prascend (PD)
- Pramipexole also known as Mirapex, Mirapexin and Sifrol (PD/RSL)
- Ropinirole also known as Requip, Repreve, Ronirol and Adartel (PD/RSL)
- Piribedil also known as Pronoran, Trivastal, Retard, Trastal, Trivastan and Clarium (PD)
- Cabaser (PD)
- Levodopa/Carbidopa (PD)
- Xadago (PD)

The Dopamine Receptor Agonists attach and mimic the action of naturally occurring dopamine to the cerebral dopamine D3 receptor which is associated with cognitive and emotional functions. They regulate “the physiologic and emotional experience of novelty, reward, risk and assessment” in obsessive compulsive disorders.

As research is made on medications and gambling, CCGNJ will update this list of medications.

If you are someone you know is experiencing gambling-related problems because of the medications prescribed, please consult your physician or contact the local Federally Qualified Health Center in your county.