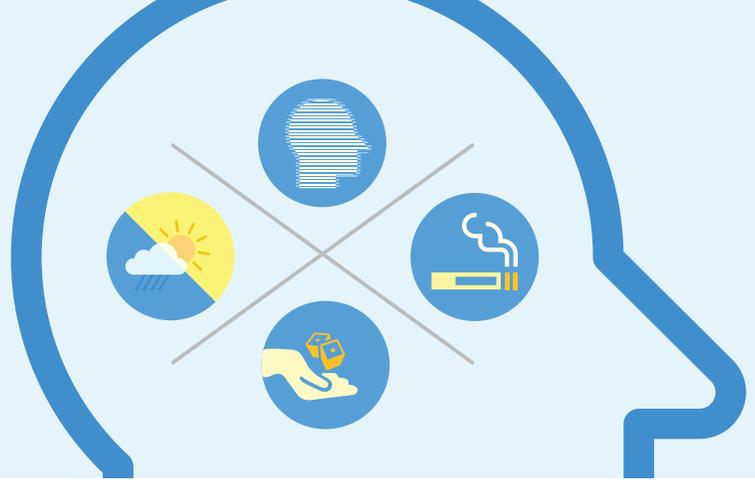


CONCURRENT DISORDERS



What is a concurrent disorder?

A concurrent disorder is when a person experiences a mental health concern and a co-occurring addiction issue. For example, a person may experience an anxiety issue and a problem gambling issue at the same time. As another example, someone can have a mood disorder, such as depression, together with a substance use issue. The term is quite general, and can include a wide range of co-occurring mental health and addiction issues.

Why is it important to know about concurrent disorders?

Problem gambling frequently co-occurs with a wide range of mental health concerns (e.g., depression, anxiety and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder) and other substance issues (e.g., smoking and alcohol use). Problems with gambling can impact mental health and mental health can also impact gambling problems.

A person with depression may gamble as a way to feel better, since the excitement of gambling might temporarily lift their mood. At the same time, this person's gambling habits may lead to issues such as financial loss or relationship issues. These issues may contribute to feelings of guilt and sadness, which can further impact their depression.

There is a strong link between problem gambling and mental health concerns. If you are facing a problem gambling issue, it is important to monitor for signs and symptoms that could indicate a possible mental health concern. Some signs and symptoms to look for are listed to the right. Please talk to a professional if you have any of these—your risk is greater with the more signs and symptoms you have.

Loss of enjoyment in activities that used to bring pleasure

Significant changes in mood (e.g., feeling unusually sad or irritable)

Extreme changes in sleep and/or eating habits

Confused or illogical thinking; difficulty concentrating

Withdrawal from friends and family

Excessive worries or fears

Detachment from reality (e.g., hearing voices or having paranoid thoughts)

Unable to cope with daily issues

Thoughts of suicide or self-harm *

Increase in substance use

Unusual decrease in functioning (e.g. at work, at school or during self-care activities)

* If you or your family member experiences thoughts of suicide or self-harm, seek medical attention right away.

How can I get support for my concurrent disorder?

There are many ways to get support if you have a concurrent disorder. The first step is to talk to your family physician about what you are feeling. Your physician will likely ask you questions or have you complete a questionnaire to determine whether there are signs of a possible concurrent disorder. There are many simple tools and assessments that are designed to screen for possible mental health concerns.

If there is any sign of a mental health concern, you can work with your family physician or therapist/counsellor to determine whether it would be best to receive specialized mental health support. There are a variety of mental health services specific to different diagnoses and populations. Some agencies may offer both problem gambling counselling and mental health services. Learn more about local services within Ontario by visiting the ConnexOntario Health Services Information website at www.connexontario.ca.

Ideally, treatment for both problem gambling and mental health issues should be provided in a *coordinated* way. For example, if you are seeing a counsellor for your problem gambling issues, as well as attending a day treatment program for mental health concerns at a separate agency, both agencies should be in contact to ensure the services complement each other.

Sometimes it is recommended that a thorough assessment period happens first and that you approach problem gambling treatment when you feel your symptoms are more in control. This helps to ensure that mental health issues do not affect your problem gambling treatment. Each person is different and requires care that is specific to their situation, concerns and treatment goals.

