



## Medication side effect: compulsive gambling

### Background

Pramipexole (Mirapex), a dopamine agonist used to treat Parkinson's, appears to have a connection with the development of compulsive behaviors.

People who have Parkinson's have an insufficient amount of the brain chemical dopamine. Synthetic versions of dopamine, such as pramipexole (Mirapex) bind to specific dopamine receptors in the brain and they help patients with Parkinson's.

### Evidence

According to the Mayo Clinic and other reputable medical sources and research, the D3 dopamine receptors that pramipexole binds to are highly concentrated in the area of the brain that is devoted to mood, behavior and rewards.

A study of people taking pramipexole for Parkinson's symptoms revealed that 1.5 percent of them developed compulsive gambling behaviors.

Most of the people who developed gambling problems did so within a month or two of starting on the medication.

Psychiatrists in Calgary, Alberta found that almost one in ten Parkinson's patients have a gambling problem.

### Sources

- Blackwell, Tom. Parkinson's Drug Likely Triggering Gambling Addiction. June 20, 2008 on [www.michaeljfox.org](http://www.michaeljfox.org)
- Crockford, David, et al. Prevalence of Problem and Pathological Gambling in Parkinson's Disease. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, June 2008.
- MayoClinic.com – M. Leann Dodd, M.D. July 2005.

