

Introduction to the Special Series on Addiction and Sports

August 5, 2015

Addiction and sports are connected with one another countless ways. At the most basic level, physical activity—running, swimming, lifting weights—can help people overcome urges to engage in addictive behavior. For example, this month's [ASHES](#) reviews a study of the beneficial effects of vigorous exercise on cigarette cravings. But participating in sports is about much more than physical activity. For example, being part of a team might serve as a protective factor against substance abuse among adolescents — except, as reviewed in [this month's STASH](#), when it results in injuries, and, ultimately, misuse of prescription pain medication. Potentially harmful associations with team sports extend to drinking, as well. As reviewed in [The DRAM](#), college athletes appear to experience a sharper increase in risky drinking from freshman year to senior year, compared with non-athletes.

Thinking even more broadly, the cultural environment surrounding sports can shape people's attitudes toward and engagement in potentially addictive behavior. As we describe in [this month's WAGER](#), researchers have discovered a relationship between the ads that infuse professional sports and gambling behavior.

This month, we explore these complex relationships as part of our Special Series on Addiction and Sports. We hope you will learn from and enjoy this Special Series.