

OLDER ADULTS AND GAMBLING

Gambling, or playing a game of chance for money or other stakes, has become a popular activity for people of many ages—and seniors are no exception. While experts agree that most adults can gamble without a problem, prevalence studies conducted in Oregon find that 2.3% of the general population¹ and 1.2% of the older adult population become problem or pathological gamblers².

Gambling opportunities in most states are plentiful. Casinos, Lottery products, and Internet gambling are more available than ever. The increase in the number of people with gambling problems corresponds to the increase in availability of gambling opportunities.

Concerns about Older Adults and Problem Gambling

Gambling among older adults is different from gambling in younger age groups for the following reasons:

- When people are coping with big changes or losses they are more vulnerable to develop a gambling problem; many older adults face life transitions and losses, such as death of loved ones, end of career, or isolation from family and friends.
- Older adults who have gambled away their retirement savings don't have working years to make up their losses.
- Many older adults may not understand addiction, making them less likely to identify a gambling problem.
- Older adults appear less willing to seek assistance for a gambling problem than younger adults.
- Many older adults hide their gambling because of the stigma associated with it and health professionals rarely assess for problem gambling.
- Many older adults have easy access to gambling and are drawn to gambling to fill their time or to be with other people.
- Some older adults may have cognitive impairment that interferes with their ability to make sound decisions.