

OLDER ADULTS & 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, studies conducted in Oregon find that 2.3% of the general population and 1.2% of the older adult population are problem or pathological gamblers.

Gambling opportunities for Oregon residents are plentiful. Tribal casinos, Lottery products, sports betting 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. Current estimates show that over 6,000 Oregonians, age 62 years or older, currently have a gambling problem.

PROBLEM GAMBLING: SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Problem gambling is a term that indicates a person's gambling compromises or damages their personal, family, or vocational pursuits. Below are some of the more common signs and symptoms of problem gambling:

- Gambling to calm nerves, forget worries, or reduce depression
- Losing interest in other things
- Spending much of the day talking about, thinking about, or planning to gamble
- Lying about gambling habits, exaggerating wins, and hiding losses
- Getting into arguments about gambling and/or having family and friends express concern
- Going without basic needs in order to gamble
- Needing to gamble more often, or with more money, in order to get the desired effect
- Acting more irritable and angry

- Experiencing health problems related to gambling like lethargy, headaches, irritable bowel, bladder problem, anxiety, and depression
- Having financial problems caused by gambling

CONCERNS ABOUT OLDER ADULTS & 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; older adults commonly face life transitions and losses such as death of loved ones, health problems, end of career, or isolation from family and friends.
- Older adults who have gambled away their retirement savings don't have the needed 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 have cognitive impairment that interferes with their ability to make sound decisions.
- Many older adults are living on a fixed income and have limited opportunities to increase their income, making them more vulnerable to the lure of gambling and more at risk when losses occur.

GETTING HELP

If you think you or someone you know may have a gambling problem, help is available. Untreated problem gambling can cause serious physical, emotional and financial problems, especially among older adults. In Oregon, treatment for problem gambling is free.

Treatment options include telephone counseling, in-person individual counseling, and group counseling. Call the confidential, 24-hour phone number below for information or help:

1-877-2-STOP-NOW (1-877-278-6766)

**Department of Human Services
Office of Mental Health and Addiction Services:**
www.dhs.state.or.us/addiction

Oregon Lottery Problem Gambling:
www.oregonlotteryhelp.com

**Oregon Gambling Addiction Treatment
Foundation:**
www.gamblingaddiction.org

Responsible Gambling:
www.responsiblegambling.org/index.cfms

Can't Wait to Gamble? Ask Yourself Why.

