

Older Adults & Gambling ~ Fact Sheet

Gambling is a popular activity among older adults.

- ❖ Up to half of older adults gamble, and over 25% wager regularly.^{1,2}
- ❖ The most popular forms of gambling in older adults are
- ❖ bingos, lotteries, scratch tickets, card games, and slot machines.³



- Even regular recreational gambling is associated with some harm in older adults.
- Older adults who gamble regularly have increased rates of smoking and alcohol problems.⁴

• Older adult recreational gamblers are more likely to be obese than their non-gambling peers.⁴

• Some older adults develop gambling problems.

• In the general population, less than 1% of older adults have a gambling problem.⁴

• However, up to 12% of older adults at bingo halls or other gambling venues have problems.^{3,5,6}

• Gambling problems in older adults relate to financial, legal, psychological and medical concerns.



What is gambling? The act of risking something of value, including money and property, on an activity that has an uncertain outcome.

What is social gambling? Social gamblers gamble for entertainment, will not risk more than they can afford, and often gamble with friends. They gamble for a limited period of time and are not preoccupied with gambling.

Resources for Help

Problem Gambling Services
Department of Mental Health
& Addiction Services,
State of Connecticut
860-344-2244
Services include
Peer Support; Bettor Choice
Program Sites; Local, regional
and statewide Prevention
Services.

The Connecticut Council on
Problem Gambling (CCPG)
Helpline 1-888-789-7777,
www.problemgambling.org



- Older adults are usually on fixed incomes. Compared to younger adults, older adults make poorer decisions when they choose between amounts and probabilities of rewards,⁷ making losses more likely and more damaging in this age group.



**Don't blow your retirement on gambling.
If you are concerned about your gambling,
get some help.**

- Six percent of older adult problem gamblers commit illegal acts to support their gambling.⁴
- Compared to non-gamblers, older adult problem gamblers are nearly 7 times more likely to be smokers, 6 times more likely to have an alcohol problem, and 3.5 times more likely to have a drug use problem.⁴
- Older adult problem gamblers also have more than a 4-fold increased risk of anxiety and depression relative to their non-gambling peers.⁴ Up to 1/3 of persons with a gambling disorder attempt suicide.⁸
- Older adults with gambling problems have higher rates of medical problems, including angina and arthritis.⁴ Problem gambling is also associated with development of heart disease in persons aged 55 and older.⁹
- Despite the prevalence of gambling and related problems in older adults, less than 10% of persons with gambling problems receive treatment.¹⁰

Treatment for gambling can be very effective.

- Over half of persons treated for gambling substantially reduce their gambling.¹¹⁻¹³
- Psychiatric distress and symptoms decrease markedly with gambling treatment.^{11,13}



References:

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