

Problem gambling affects older adults

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.

Gambling opportunities for Oregon residents are plentiful. 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 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, 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 or live on fixed incomes don't have the needed working years to make up their losses.

- Older adults are less likely to seek help for gambling problems.
- 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 medical conditions that may interfere with their ability to make healthy decisions.

If you think you might be gambling too much, or if you are worried about a friend or relative, help is available.

Oregon has a toll-free gambling help line:

877-MY-LIMIT
(877-695-4648)

10 Rules for responsible gambling

1. If you choose to gamble, do so for entertainment purposes.
2. Treat the money you lose as the cost of your entertainment.
3. Set a dollar limit and stick to it.
4. Set a time limit and stick to it.
5. Expect to lose.
6. Don't use your credit card to gamble.
7. Create balance in your life.
8. Don't increase your betting to make up for money you lost.
9. Don't gamble as a way to cope with stress, loneliness, or depression.
10. Educate yourself about problem gambling.

Treatment is free & confidential

In Oregon, treatment for problem gambling is free. 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.

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

877-MY-LIMIT (877-695-4648)

For more information:

Department of Human Services
Addictions & Mental Health Division:
www.oregon.gov/DHS/addiction

Oregon Lottery Problem Gambling Help
Site: www.oregonlotteryhelp.com

Gambler's Anonymous:
www.gamblersanonymous.org/mtgdirOR.html

Gam-Anon:
www.gam-anon.org/meeting.asp

BLOWING YOUR RETIREMENT ON GAMBLING?



Get help for a gambling problem

Counseling is free, confidential and it works.

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