



Older Adults and Problem Gambling

Concerns About Older Adults and Problem Gambling

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

- Big life changes or loss (retirement, death of loved ones, housing changes, isolation) can cause people to be more vulnerable.
- Financial resources (retirement savings) are limited and can't be replenished after big gambling losses.
- Older adults may not understand addiction, making them less likely to identify a gambling problem.
- Older adults can be 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.
- Older adults often have easy access to gambling and are drawn to gambling to fill their time or to be with other people.
- Cognitive impairment can interfere with the ability to make sound decisions.



Casinos Market Heavily to Older Adults

Casinos cater to older adults by enticing them with free bus transportation, free or discounted meals and entertainment, promotional coupons (such as player reward cards) and other prizes. Casinos also provide seniors with wheelchairs or motorized scooters to make them feel at home in their facilities.

Social Casino & Online Gaming

Social casino games and online gaming are typically accessed through phones and tablets. These games are often unregulated, and the operators use predatory methods to get players to spend money to continue playing or to buy upgrades, even though they are often billed as "free" games. Spending on these games can become out-of-control and can lead to addictive behavior.

Signs of Gambling Addiction In Older Adults

Because older adults tend to live away from their younger family members, their addiction can remain hidden for long stretches of time. Signs include:



Gamble to calm nerves, forget worries or reduce depression



Lose interest in other things, such as food or go without basic needs



Talk about, think about or plan to gamble and not do other activities



Lie about gambling habits



Appear withdrawn or frequently unavailable



Be vague when describing their days and activities



Talk a lot about exciting wins – but never discuss their losses



Gamble alone or gamble more often



Get into arguments about gambling



Need to gamble more and more money in order to get the desired effect



Experience health problems related to gambling like lethargy, headaches, bladder problems, anxiety and depression



Have financial problems caused by gambling or have sold off valuable possessions



Gambling is becoming the most popular activity for older adults – over shopping, recreational activities and travel

250,000 Minnesota adults exhibit problems with gambling

22% of Minnesotans are negatively affected by the gambling behavior of others



Minnesota Alliance on Problem Gambling
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Follow us @MinnesotaAPG on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter

As the state advocate for problem gambling, we are available for community presentations.

Minnesota gambling helpline
1-800-333-HOPE (4673)

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When is it a concern?

