

# 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.<sup>1,2</sup>
- ❖ The most popular forms of gambling in older adults are bingos, lotteries, scratch tickets, card games, and slot machines.<sup>3</sup>



- 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.<sup>4</sup>

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

• Some older adults develop gambling problems.

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

• However, up to 12% of older adults at bingo halls or other gambling venues have problems.<sup>3,5,6</sup>

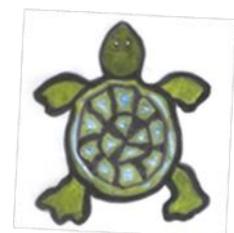


**What is gambling?** The act of risking something of value, including money and property, on an activity that has an uncertain outcome.

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

### MISSION of PGS

To provide a comprehensive network of consumer oriented problem gambling recovery services for people of Connecticut and to foster an environment throughout the State that promotes informed choices around gambling behavior.



- Gambling problems in older adults relate to financial, legal, psychological and medical concerns.
- 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,<sup>7</sup> making losses more likely and more damaging in this age group.



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

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

## **Treatment for gambling can be very effective.**

- Over half of persons treated for gambling substantially reduce their gambling.<sup>11-13</sup>
- Psychiatric distress and symptoms decrease markedly with gambling treatment.<sup>11,13</sup>



### References:

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