

Gambling... No Problem?

Information for Healthcare
Professionals and
Caregivers



- 25,000 Pennsylvanians struggle with problem gambling annually.
- Studies on problem gambling show associations between older adult gambling and less favorable physical and psychosocial health.
- In 2012 3.16 billion dollars spent in casinos, demonstrating a 4.6% increase from 2011 figures.
- Problem gambling may look like deteriorating health, which is common in advanced age.

Sources: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. (2012). Older adults and gambling. Pietrzak, R. H., & Petry, N. M. (2006). and Severity of gambling problems and psychosocial functioning in older adults. *Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry & Neurology*, 19, 106+.

Gambling Fiction and Facts



Fiction: People with dementia cannot gamble

Fact: People with dementia can gamble, e.g. scratch-off and slot machines.

Fiction: The lottery is not gambling.

Fact: Playing the lottery is gambling. Betting any amount of money or item of value on chance with the goal of reaping profit is gambling.

Fiction: Older people can't/don't gamble.

Fact: Older people often gamble and find it enjoyable.

Fiction: Gambling is good for older people because it funds programs that benefit the elderly.

Fact: Only the *proceeds* from legal gambling benefit elderly.

Fiction: People who can't leave the house can't gamble.

Fact: Online, phone, scratchers, and call-in bets can be accomplished without leaving home.

Fiction: People with intellectual disabilities don't gamble.

Fact: Scratchers and slot machines are easy to use and widely available. Casinos are on bus lines.

Types and Effects of Gambling

Types of Gambling:

- Casinos
- Sports betting
- Online gambling
- PA Lottery
- Bingo
- Informal gatherings, cards
- Sweepstakes
- Horse Racing
- Stock Market



Problem Gambling in Older Adults:

- **Physical:** Long periods spent seated can result in orthopedic issues. Lack of physical exercise can result in reduced cognitive functioning.
- **Social:** Time spent gambling can result in reduced social interaction, isolating individuals.
- **Financial:** Gambling drains already limited resources for the elderly leaving reduced funds for necessities and increasing the likelihood of debt.
- **Psychological:** Mood swings, anxiety, depression and increased suicide risk are associated with problem gambling. Online gambling is associated with poor mental health and substance abuse.

Source: Pietrzak, R. H., & Petry, N. M. (2006). Severity of gambling problems and psychosocial functioning in older adults. *Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry & Neurology*, 19, 106+.

The Gambling Cycle



Most people who gamble do so safely and without consequences. However, the cycle of gambling can be damaging to the emotional, physical and economic well being of individuals, particularly the elderly. Therefore, breaking the gambling cycle may be beneficial.





Symptoms of Problem Gambling

A Persistent and recurrent problematic gambling behavior leading to clinically significant impairment or distress, as indicated by the individual exhibiting four (or more) of the following in a 12-month period:

- Needs to gamble with increasing amounts of money in order to achieve the desired excitement.
- Is restless or irritable when attempting to cut down or stop gambling
- Has made repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back, or stop gambling
- Is often preoccupied with gambling (e.g., having persistent thoughts of reliving past gambling experiences, handicapping or planning the next venture, thinking of ways to get money with which to gamble)
- Often gambles when feeling distressed (e.g., helpless, guilty, anxious, depressed)
- After losing money gambling, often returns another day to get even (“chasing” one’s losses)
- Lies to conceal the extent of involvement with gambling.
- Has jeopardized or lost a significant relationship, job, or educational or career opportunity because of gambling.
- Relies on others to provide money to relieve desperate financial situations caused by gambling.

Source: American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders: DSM-5*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association.



Screening for Gambling Problems



Brief Biosocial Gambling Screening

A “yes” answer to any of the questions means the person is at risk for a gambling problem.

1. During the past 12 months, have you become restless, irritable or anxious when trying to stop/cut down on gambling?
2. During the past 12 months, have you tried to keep your family or friends from knowing how much you gambled?
3. During the past 12 months, did you have such financial trouble as a result of your gambling that you had to get help with living expenses from family, friends or welfare?

Source: National Center for Responsible Gaming, www.ncrg.org

Additional Assessment Tools:

CAMH Gambling Screen

Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI)

Check Your Gambling

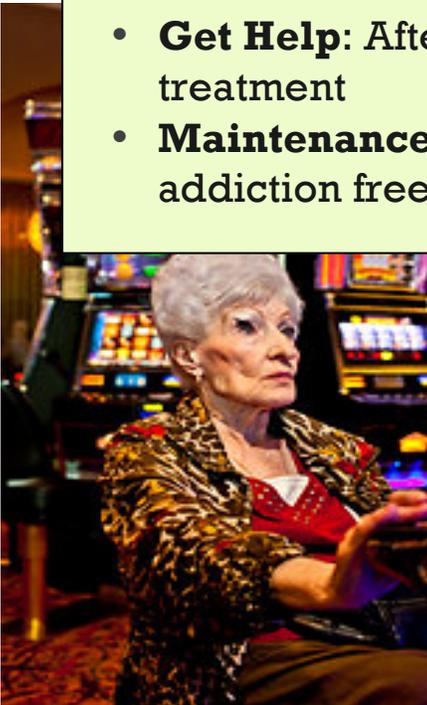
GA 20 Questions

South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS)

How Can Healthcare Professionals and Caregivers Help?

- **Prevention:** Seek alternative opportunities for stimulation and socialization by encouraging volunteer work or community activities for healthy older adults who seem to be increasingly reliant on gambling for entertainment and relief of boredom
- **Encourage 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. Make it a private rule not to gamble on credit.
 7. Create balance in your life.
 8. Avoid “chasing” lost money.
 9. Don’t gamble as a way to cope with emotional/physical pain.
 10. Learn about the warning signs of problem gambling.
- **Get Help:** After assessing, refer identified clients for treatment
- **Maintenance:** Encourage clients to maintain healthy, addiction free lifestyle with planning and support

Source: PA Gaming Control Board,
http://gamingcontrolboard.pa.gov/files/compulsive/compulsive_gaming_week/Rules.pdf



Gambling Resources:

1-800-848-1880: Pennsylvania Compulsive Gambling Hotline

1-877-565-2112: Pennsylvania Bureau on Drug and Alcohol Programs

412-281-7484: Gamblers Anonymous

www.pacouncil.com: Council on Compulsive Gambling of Pennsylvania

www.health.state.pa.us/gambling: gambling addiction services

Citations

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