

Gambling and Older People

Did you know?

- Approximately 8% of problem gamblers and 29% of moderate risk gamblers are over the age of 60 years¹
- Pokie machines are preferred for of gambling in older people²
- Older people experience a number of risk factors for problem gambling such as difficulty adjusting to retirement and decreased mobility and physical health
- The impacts of problem gambling of older people are significant due to a reduced ability to replenish savings after retirement.

Why are older people at risk of gambling problems?

Gambling activities, such as playing the pokies, are seen as a way to alleviate some of the experiences associated with older adulthood. These experiences include:

- Greater leisure time due to retirement
- Boredom/difficulty adjusting to retirement
- Loneliness and isolation
- Relationship breakdown
- Grieving/loss (partner or friends passing away)
- Children leaving home or moving away
- Poor physical health and mobility
- Depression/anxiety.^{3,4}

What are the impacts of problem gambling on older people?

- Financial problems due to inability to replenish savings through employment
- Mental health problems
- Family conflicts
- Increased stress as a result of financial and relationship problems
- Social isolation
- Shame/stigma in seeking help
- Drug and alcohol problems.⁵

What barriers to seeking help for gambling problems do older people experience?

- Denial that a problem exists
- A belief that the problem can be solved without external assistance
- Embarrassment and shame associated with acknowledgement of the problem
- A belief that further gambling can solve the problem
- A fear that seeking help will mean a person is told they can't gamble anymore, eliminating their only activity outside the house.⁶

Gambling and Older People

What are some health promotion actions that target older people and gambling?

- Encourage use of alternative activities/venues for group outings
- Work with superannuation funds and/or Centrelink on providing responsible gambling information
- Provide gambling education to professionals who come into contact with older people, such as HACC workers
- Provide affordable and accessible forms of recreation e.g. tai chi, University of the Third Age.

What are some examples of *settings* for health promotion actions that target older people and gambling?

- Bowls clubs
- Retirement Villages
- Shopping Centres
- Centrelink Offices
- Council libraries
- Doctor's surgeries
- Senior Citizens Centres

Want to know more?

Contact James Dunne, Project Officer Problem Gambling Prevention, HealthWest Partnership on 9313 5080 or at james.healthwest@isispc.com.au or visit www.problemgambling.vic.gov.au.

¹ Boreham, P., Laffan, W. and Johnson, J. (2006) *Responsible Gambling Strategy for Older Queenslanders*. University of Queensland Social Research Centre, Brisbane

² *ibid*

³ Boreham et al (2006)

⁴ Office for Gaming and Racing (2009) *Health Promotion Resource Kit for Problem Gambling*. Department of Justice, Melbourne

⁵ Boreham et al (2006)

⁶ *ibid*