

**Seniors May Be At Risk For Gambling Problems**

(NAPS)—Seniors are one of the fastest-growing groups of gamblers. Between 1974 and 1994, the percentage of seniors who “recently gambled” jumped from 20 to 50 percent. And a recent study found gambling to be the most frequently identified social activity among adults over 65, with casinos and bingo surpassing movies, lunch, shopping and golf as preferred social activities.



**A free national helpline is available for seniors who may have a gambling problem.**

There are a number of reasons why seniors may be vulnerable to gambling problems. Senior citizens are often catered to by casinos, with bus transportation, free or discounted meals, special rewards and other prizes that attract older individuals. Gambling may provide a distraction to escape the loss of a spouse or a medical concern. Some may have financial problems they are seeking to overcome. The attention of casino staff may reduce feelings of loneliness. Cognitive impairment may prevent the recognition of a gambling problem. Seniors may not understand addiction and be reluctant to seek help.

Signs of seniors having a gambling problem include loss of interest and participation in normal activities with friends and families, blocks of time unaccounted for, missing possessions or assets, and changes in attitude and personality. Gambling problems may also be evidenced by neglect of personal needs (food, utilities and medical), secrecy and avoidance when discussing time and money, and depression.

Studies show that seniors are at risk for developing gambling problems. A 2006 New Jersey Study found that 23 percent of New Jersey residents over 55 had at least one symptom of a gambling problem. A 2005 Pennsylvania study found that 10 percent of those over 65 in a primary care facility were at risk for problem gambling.

Seniors with a gambling problem and their loved ones need to know that help is available. The National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) operates a 24-hour National Problem Gambling Helpline, a link for treatment, recovery groups and other resources for problem gamblers and their family members. Often, simply a kind and helpful listener can help a senior admit to a problem and seek help. To learn more or find help, call (800) 522-4700 or visit [www.ncpgambling.org](http://www.ncpgambling.org).

**Did You Know?**  
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