Do you think you or someone you know may be experiencing hearing loss? Gradual hearing loss may not be evident at first, and the issue can be a difficult one to address even when obvious. Experiencing hearing loss can be frustrating and scary, but you are not alone. If you think you or someone you know may be experiencing hearing loss, asking the following questions can help to identify if it is time to consult a physician:

- Do you find yourself asking others to repeat things during conversation?
- Do others around you complain that the music or television is too loud?
- Is it difficult to understand others during conversation and/or do you frequently mishear what people say?
- Is it difficult to hear others in the presence of background noise and/or over the telephone?
- Do you experience frequent ringing of the ear, pain, pressure or feeling of fluid in the ear?

It is important to identify the issue and seek treatment right away if hearing loss is suspected, and your ability to hear is worth it! Treatment options are available and you can take steps to improve your quality of life today!

Information obtained and adapted from the following sources:
- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association - Causes of Hearing Loss in Adults
http://www.asha.org/public/hearing/disorders/causes_adults.htm
- Hearing Loss Association of America – Basic Facts about Hearing Loss
http://www.hearingloss.org/content/basic-facts-about-hearing-loss
- National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders: Hearing Loss and Older Adults

Have You Heard?
Hearing Loss in Adults: Understanding a Prevalent Issue and How to Address It

This information is provided courtesy of the Wyoming AgrAbility Project. For more information, visit our website at www.uwyo.edu/agrability/ or call toll-free at 866-395-4986. This material is based upon work supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under Agreement No. 2010-41590-20741. University of Wyoming is an affirmative action/equal opportunity institution.
Causes of Hearing Loss in Adults

Causes of hearing loss may fall under the categories of conductive hearing loss, sensorineural hearing loss, or possibly both. Some of the many causes of hearing loss in adults include the following:

· Ear infections, which may sometimes result in a perforated ear drum.

· Exposure to loud noises while not using adequate ear protection.

· Otosclerosis, which is a hereditary disorder, interferes with the movement and vibration of the small bones in the middle ear.

· Head trauma, injury to the ear, or tumor growth.

· Certain medications can result in what is known as ototoxicity. This type of medication-induced hearing loss can be caused by several kinds of drugs, which is why it is important to be aware of potential side effects when starting new medications.

· Meniere’s disease, which affects the inner ear, can result in a number of complications including tinnitus, dizziness, hearing loss and sound sensitivity.

· Presbycusis, which may occur gradually throughout adulthood.

Treatment and Assistive Technology

Many treatment options exist for individuals experiencing hearing loss. It is important to see a physician and/or audiologist as soon as possible if hearing loss is suspected, and treatment options vary depending on the cause and severity. Options may include:

· Hearing Aids – These devices fit inside or around the ear to amplify sound and can greatly improve hearing in many cases. There are many different sizes and styles of hearing aids.

· Cochlear Implants – These devices assist the auditory nerve of the inner ear, and consist of both an internal, surgically implanted component and an external component.

· Hearing Assistive Technology Systems – These devices can assist an individual in a variety of settings by amplifying sound. Many different kinds of devices are available for use in the classroom, in the home, in public spaces and more.

· Other options may include surgery or medical treatment for infection.

Know the Facts:

· In the U.S., an estimated 17% of adults have some level of hearing loss, and this number increases to 1 in 3 people after the age of 65.

· Hearing loss is prevalent among adult populations and is the third most common physical condition.

· While there are a number of causes behind hearing loss in adulthood, the most common factors include noise-induced hearing loss and effects of aging.

· Age-related hearing loss is known as Presbycusis.

· Noise-induced hearing loss is the most common physical disability experienced by veterans returning from combat.

· Tinnitus, which is ringing in the ears, may accompany hearing loss.