

# Glaucoma awareness month – don't get blindsided

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Dr. Dan Beers

A patient undergoes an eye exam performed by ophthalmologist Dr. Dan Beers the only way to detect glaucoma.

More than 66.8 million people are visually impaired by glaucoma worldwide and the disease has blinded 6.7 million people, according to the National Glaucoma Research, a program of the American Health Assistance Foundation.

The foundation is committed to funding research and getting the word out about glaucoma – January is National Glaucoma Awareness Month.

People of all ages – from babies to senior citizens – are at risk for this incurable disease, which is a group of diseases that affect the optic nerve and can cause blindness without any warning or symptoms. It is not curable and any vision lost cannot be regained. Glaucoma is the leading cause of preventable blindness.

The only way to combat glaucoma is to be aware of it, according to ophthalmologist Dr. Dan Beers of the Peninsula Laser Eye Medical Group. Early detection by an ophthalmologist can prevent blindness, he said, adding that he strongly suggests annual eye exams.

Three million Americans have glaucoma, but only half of them know it.

“If you wait until you are having problems seeing, it could be too late,” Beers said.

A well-trained ophthalmologist should be able to detect early stages of glaucoma through careful examination of the optic nerve, the bundle of

nerve fibers that carries information from the eye to the brain, he said.

Once the disease is detected, its progression can be slowed dramatically through the use of prescription eyedrops or laser procedures that reduce the amount of swelling in the optic nerve.

Beers said if he notices anything unusual about the optic nerve, he immediately uses Heidelberg Retinal Tomography (HRT) for further testing. The HRT is the best instrument available to analyze the optic nerve in three dimensions.

“It takes a three-dimensional view to find early loss in optic nerve tissue,” Beers said.

For more information, visit [www.ahaf.org/glaucoma](http://www.ahaf.org/glaucoma).