

## H1N1 Virus in Bonner and Boundary Communities

A group visiting Bonner and Boundary counties from out of state includes one person with a confirmed case of H1N1 influenza and seven people with possible H1N1 flu.

The group of more than 100 people has been active in communities in both counties since early June. A woman in her 20s with the group became ill last week and tested positive for the Influenza A virus. That test was sent to the Idaho State Laboratory in Boise, which confirmed Thursday the virus was Novel H1N1.

Over the weekend, seven more group members tested positive for the Influenza A virus and their tests were sent to the state lab for confirmation of H1N1. Those results will be available by mid week.

“The virus is widespread nationwide. People need to stay aware of the symptoms and how to prevent catching the virus or spreading it,” said Jeanne Bock, Panhandle Health District (PHD) director. “Anyone with symptoms should self-isolate and seek medical attention from their doctor when and if the symptoms grow unmanageable.”

PHD and a local doctor are monitoring the group and working with communities to control the spread as much as possible. The group confirmed Monday that they plan to leave the state for home on Tuesday.

H1N1 symptoms include:

- Fever
- Sore throat
- Cough
- Body aches
- Headache
- Chills
- Fatigue

PHD advises that anyone with particularly the first three symptoms stay home and keep their distance—three to six feet—from other people for seven days or until the symptoms end, whichever is longer. People whose symptoms worsen or don’t improve should call a doctor, who will decide if a test is appropriate.

Health authorities believe H1N1 spreads through the air like the seasonal flu. Because H1N1 is a new virus, people have little to no immunity to it. Symptoms, too, are similar to the seasonal flu. Only a test can identify the virus causing the illness.

No vaccine is available yet to prevent catching the new virus. The process to develop an effective vaccine takes six to nine months from the time the virus is first identified.

“It’s important for the public to stay vigilant regarding this virus,” Bock said.