



# CDC Director Compares Ebola to AIDS. But How Similar Are They?

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Speaking at a World Bank meeting, Tom Frieden, MD, MPH, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said this about Ebola: “In the 30 years I’ve been working in public health, the only thing like this has been AIDS.” He added, according to [CNN](#), “We have to work now so this is not the world’s next AIDS.”

Such a statement raises the question: Are the two viruses alike? As [Healthline](#) reports, yes they are, but there are also important differences. Both Ebola and HIV derive from host animals in Africa; both can be fatal if untreated; and neither has a vaccine. Ebola’s latency period is often shorter than 21 days, while HIV can infect a person without showing symptoms for nearly 10 years.

Both viruses spread through bodily fluids but different ones. HIV is contracted through blood, breast milk and sexual fluids that enter the body through breaks in the skin, needles or mucous membranes like those in the vagina or anus. Ebola can also spread through blood and sexual fluids as well as through saliva, sweat, urine, vomit and feces. Ebola can spread through contact with broken skin or the mucous membranes found in the eyes, nose and mouth as well.

Similarities also exist in the way that the public and health care officials respond to the viruses. HIV in the United States was first associated with gay men, which led to stigmatization of the disease and a slower response to the epidemic. Similarly, many people today mistakenly think Ebola will only affect poor Africans and African immigrants.

For more details about HIV transmission, check out our AIDSmeds lesson on the topic [here](#).

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<http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/ebola-similar-aids-26307-5498>