

# MAX AND THE FESTIVAL “HEALTH ALERT”

ASK FOR  
EVIDENCE 

Sometimes we come across alarming stories in the media that sounds like they're based on scientific fact. Festival-goer Max read one describing a health alert linked to festival wristbands. He decided to #AskforEvidence. Here's his story...

## WHAT WAS THE CLAIM?

I read an article claiming that festival wristbands were found to harbour 20 times the concentration of dangerous bugs commonly found on clothes. This was described as a “health alert” even though only two wristbands had been tested!

## WHERE DID YOU SEE/HEAR IT?

The Daily Mirror

## WHO DID YOU ASK? WHAT DID YOU ASK?

I wrote to the scientist quoted in the article, Dr Alison Cottell, asking if she had seen the article and if there was evidence for the claim.

## WHAT WAS THE RESPONSE?

I heard back from Dr Cottell right away.

*Dear Max,*

*Thanks for your email. I did not see the article in the Mirror.*

*I said that there were approximately 20 times the number of skin bacteria (rather than dangerous bacteria) on the two wristbands tested, compared to values published in the literature for clothing. However, I never described this as a “health alert”, nor would I, and I am happy for you to share this publicly.*

*Thanks,*

*Alison*

## HAPPY? UNHAPPY?

I think it is safe to assume that Dr Cottell herself did not overstate the evidence, and that it was the Mirror that exaggerated the claim. What Dr Cottell has said seems to be reasonable and so I am fine with her response.



“Ask for Evidence”



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