

Dear CTA:

Thank you for opening up the discussion about travelling with food allergies in Canada. As the mother of a 7 year old with anaphylaxis to peanuts, this is extremely important to me and my family. My son been exposed to peanuts twice during his young life, and both times, suffered greatly with anaphylactic shock and required immediate hospitalization. The only way to effectively prevent this life-threatening event is complete avoidance of peanuts. Even residual peanut left on door handles can be enough of a trigger to end my son's life and this is a fear we live with every day. Hand sanitizer does not remove peanut protein.

When we travel, we are diligent about wiping down seats, arm rests and tray areas in hopes that we can remove anything leftover from passengers before us. We fly quite often and I have been terrified to say anything to the flight crew, because of the poor treatment families with allergies have faced in the past from airlines, including being banned from flights. I am equipped at all times with epipens and asthma inhalers just in case, but it is always a risk travelling by air.

It is air travel that evokes the most concern for parents of allergic children. When you are 45,000 feet in the air, you are far from emergency medical care! It is a circumstance that warrants extra consideration, for that reason alone.

Fatal food allergies are only increasing. This is backed by medical research. We know it is happening more. Those who live with food allergies are not trying to be a nuisance to others; they are simply trying to get from one place to another without having a reaction. I understand that people want to feel free to eat whatever they want on flights without restrictions, but that freedom does not outweigh my son's risk of a painful, terrifying death. My advice would be to ban all major food allergens from flights, including food that is brought on board by passengers. At this point, with no cure, prevention is the only option we have.

As well, people with food allergies should not be made to feel like a "problem" to the airlines. We pay the same amount of money to fly and deserve respect. This is a medical condition. The Canadian government has a duty to protect these individuals and ensure that the regulations in place emphasize the value of their lives and well-being.

This is a problem that will not go away and needs to be addressed at a federal level, and I applaud your efforts to gather feedback from the tax payers and consumers in this country.

Please contact me if you require any additional information.

Andrea Patrick