

I have read many of the comments submitted here regarding fatal food allergies and I share and echo the same, very serious concerns.

I am 54 years old and have numerous food allergies (poultry, legumes, certain fruits, etc.) but the most severe are to all tree nuts and peanuts. I have had my anaphylactic reaction to all nuts since birth. In fact, my father, sister and my niece all share the same nut allergies. We all of course manage with the appropriate precautions including avoidance, where possible, and carry our EpiPens and Benadryl wherever we go. Most of my other food allergies require ingestion, whereas my nut allergy sensitivity has now progressed reactions due to airborne exposure in addition to ingested. In virtually every location I go (restaurants, office meeting rooms, airplanes, etc.) I have to immediately assess the size of the room and the ventilation in addition to what people may be eating or drinking to determine if I'm likely to react.

Despite all precautions I still experience 3 to 4 reactions per month, although only one or two per year typically require a trip to the hospital. My most frightening reaction was on a cruise ship in the middle of the ocean a day and a half from the nearest port, where the medical staff compounded the the issue by injecting the adrenaline directly into my vein! I was not coherent enough at that point to realize (and stop) what they were doing and although the reaction subsided, the result was months of migraines, CAT scans and other complications.

By far my most frequent source of anaphylactic reactions are airplanes. I travel on business 20 to 30 times per year and each trip is an adventure and source of stress. Airlines of course do not have a standardized policy regarding nuts or other allergens, and some still serve almonds, cashews or peanuts on their planes. The transfer of oils onto seats, armrests, table trays and other places make it difficult to avoid from a physical contact standpoint, while the airborne impact of a number of people eating either the nuts served or their own trail mix (which many passengers bring with them) make it unavoidable. On longer flights I make the request in advance of the flight date to ask if they would refrain from serving nuts on the particular flight I'm on. Most (but not all) airlines are usually accommodating. On short haul flights, given the frequency of my travel and the short time between my booking and travel dates, it's often difficult to request in advance, and sometimes embarrassing to request as I board. Even when I do, as I've been told many times, it is at the discretion of the particular flight crew for that flight to decide whether they wish to accommodate. Again, most airlines/crews are understanding about it, but some roll their eyes, and often other passengers look at me as though I'm depriving them of their favorite part of the flight.

As others have mentioned in their comments, I understand how it can be inconvenient for others to have to sacrifice something for a condition many still can't appreciate unless they know of or have personal experience with it, but if our school system can take proactive measures to prohibit at least all forms of nuts from Ontario schools, then a similar policy for air travel or other forms of contained travel would be a significant step forward for those of us, young and old, who live in a "may contain" world with life threatening land mines at every turn.

Sincerely,

Chris Cameron
Executive Director
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