

September 30, 2016

To Whom It May Concern:

My toddler son has severe food allergies to tree nuts, dairy and mustard. Food allergy diagnosis requires a complete re-thinking of how to live life. As my husband and I have navigated these changes, we have become increasingly aware of how little understanding there is of food allergy at all levels of society, with even paramedics not being up to date on best treatment for anaphylaxis, and severe allergic reactions barely receiving mention in common first aid training courses. This is concerning considering the increased prevalence of severe food allergy in Canada. Pair this lack of awareness of the general public with the confines of an airplane, and the concern grows exponentially.

My family and I strongly advocate for the implementation of rules concerning food allergy for air travel and enforcement of said rules. Rules and regulations ought to include the following:

1. Airlines should not serve top allergens in their food service.
2. Airline staff should be trained on recognizing the symptoms of anaphylaxis and trained on how to administer epinephrine.
 - www.allergyaware.ca provides excellent training that only takes 20-30min to complete and it includes a downloadable certificate of completion. It would be wonderful to see airlines utilizing this high quality resource for staff training. This training can be repeated annually as part of mandatory professional development.
3. In addition to the first aid training around severe allergy and anaphylaxis, staff training should include customer service and care elements such as patience, empathy, helpfulness, and accommodation. It must be taught that people living with food allergy are not merely picky or demanding passengers, rather we people who are managing a life-threatening medical condition that is often misunderstood, downplayed, and belittled and thus often requires a high level of assertiveness and self-advocacy.
 - Air travel, especially long haul flights, and flights over oceans are particularly stressful for people living with severe food allergy. The stressful nature of this type of travel is exacerbated for the parents of young children who crawl around on the airplane floors and have a fascination for picking up small objects, like nuts. Thus it would go a long way if airline staff could keep some of these things in mind when interacting with allergic customers.
4. Guidelines for thorough cleaning should be implemented. Though we are told that planes are cleaned between flights, I have often found crumbs and whole food items on the floor (including nuts), in the pocket on seatbacks, and on the

seats themselves. Food allergic people are often cautious and do their own cleaning, but it would make boarding the plane more efficient for everyone if airline staff were required to do this more thoroughly first.

5. Guidelines for communicating with other passengers, and rules regarding the behaviour of other passengers are needed. Notices should be posted which inform all passengers of the dangers of bringing top allergens onto an airplane, or to explain why top allergens are not allowed on flights at all.
 - Airline staff should advocate for the safety of food allergic passengers, by taking the initiative to clearly communicate with other passengers about the presence of a person with severe food allergies, and ensuring other passengers comply with the safety needs of the allergic passenger by asking people not to eat the allergen and even confiscating the food item if necessary. These safety measures should be mandatory, and non-compliant passengers should be fined and removed.

I believe these ideas for rules, regulations and guidelines will safeguard both Canadians living with severe food allergy, and airline staff, as well as increase quality of life.

Hopefully rules and regulations will do the following:

- Protect Canadians with food allergy from anaphylactic reactions;
- Reduce stress in daily life for Canadians with food allergy;
- Reduce workplace stress experienced by airline staff who mediate conflict that arises between passengers over food;
- Reduce the likelihood of workplace trauma: In the event of an anaphylactic reaction, a well trained staff person will have less likelihood of experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder because he/she will be well trained on how to respond correctly.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these ideas on how to keep Canadians safe.

Sincerely,
Christina Lui