

Travelers who are diagnosed with food allergy and asthma are at significant risk if they have a reaction while isolated on an airplane, train, ferry or bus. This diagnosis - anaphylaxis - is by definition life threatening, it is also rapid in its onset typically and is severe in terms of symptoms. The two life threatening symptoms are difficulty breathing and drop of blood pressure or hypotension. Without breath (oxygen) and blood pressure, death is inevitable without rapid and accurate medical treatment. Hospitalization following emergency treatment is necessary for further medical intervention making avoidance measures all the more relevant to pay attention too. On planes there is obviously increased risk when compared to other methods of transportation. Lowering of risk is a reasonable accommodation to expect due to the nature of this condition.

Transportation in the modern world is an essential part of an average Canadian's life, for work or pleasure. Steps should be taken to mitigate risk for this growing number of Canadians - there is no cure in sight and accommodations for their safety should be a high priority for public health and government. Risk reduction is the only method to avoid a reaction, for food allergy is avoidance of allergens, cleaning of surfaces (planes are particularly dirty these days) recognition of symptoms, training of personal so that they are able to assist individuals while waiting for medical help, availability of medication and emergency protocol. For asthmatics, remove cats and dogs (and other animals) from flights, humans have more right to be safe and be able to breathe air without contaminants than the rights of those wishing to bring animals on board an aircraft. The exception would be seeing eye dogs or service dogs that need to be on flights to help disabled passengers, have these passengers in a contained area away from other passengers or on designated flights only. There is zero rationale to have a cat on a flight. For people with both food allergy and asthma, they are at increased risk of a severe allergic reaction.

Most allergic travelers will take steps to mitigate risk themselves by bringing their own food and medication, however, what others do around them does affect their safety and their ability to have safe environment. It doesn't seem that long ago that smoking was allowed on flights - the public soon adapted to the banning of cigarettes on planes, trains and buses (and indeed in public places in Canada) this was quite easily accepted because of the obvious health benefits and I see that this - food allergy and asthma - presents a very similar situation. Communication and public responsibility to meet this emerging and challenging disease is vital.

Please engage experts in the field of food allergy and asthma (Canadian Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology - CSACI) in order to move towards finding a solution that is both reasonable and sustainable with a clear focus on accommodation and safety for this significant portion of our population.

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