

Hello,

I am an adult who is anaphylactic to peanuts and tree nuts. Travelling with these allergies is incredibly stressful, especially travelling by air whereby emergency help is not readily available. Having a food allergy is a disability and in this day and age, it should be recognized as such.

I am asking that you seriously consider putting parameters in place to help those of us with food allergies. When possible, which unfortunately is not always the case, I fly WestJet as their policies, support and treatment of those with food allergies is exemplary, making for a less stressful, enjoyable trip. If more airlines would follow WestJet's policies, the allergic world would be a happier place.

I would ask that you consider the following for air travel:

1. Airlines do not serve or sell peanuts and tree nuts on their planes.
2. Airlines make announcements on the plane explaining that someone on board has the particular food allergy and ask passengers to accommodate this person as much as possible. (Note: At times, WestJet has also made announcements at the gate in order that passengers have the opportunity to purchase other snacks prior to boarding.)
3. Provide a buffer zone for the allergic person which includes the row the allergic person is sitting in, the row in front and the row behind. Also it would not hurt for the people directly across the aisle from the allergic person to be notified too.
4. Allow the allergic person to pre-board to wipe down the area they will be sitting in.
5. Make it known to the allergic person that they must bring their own food on to the flight, as there could be a possibility of cross contamination from the kitchens that cater meals/snacks to the airlines. We, the allergic people, also have to take responsibility while flying.
6. Make it known to the allergic person that they must travel with their own appropriate medication.

I do not understand why accommodation cannot be made for people with this type of disability. This is a severe, life threatening condition we live with and have to deal with every minute of every day of our lives. It is not like other medical conditions whereby it "might" happen, having a food allergy is a guarantee that it will happen in the right situation. It is stressful at the best of times, let alone have to sit in an aircraft for upwards of 16 hours (to Australia) which feels like eternity.

Believe me, being allergic to food(s) is not something we have chosen to have and there is no cure for it. We can only hope that our epipen(s) will work if we need them and even then perhaps one or even two are not enough - a person can only safely administer a certain number of epipens themselves before requiring hospital attention. It should also be noted that using an epipen is not as easy as just taking some type of tablet. The reactions from administering one ranges from feeling very sick (or vomiting) to shaking uncontrollably, dangerously rapid heart rate and the list goes on. Not something someone in an airplane wants to go through - scary and very embarrassing for the allergic person and very uncomfortable and stressful for other passengers and crew. One does not recover instantly after injecting an epipen, leaving you to have to continue to sit on a crowded, cramped plane, anxiety ridden, not feeling well, worrying about whether you will have a second reaction which can occur hours later. There is this belief by many that as long as you have an epipen, you are safe. It is not necessarily the case and an allergist can confirm this for you. In making decisions on these policies, everyone involved should be required to watch a video of a real anaphylactic reaction in order to gain a better understanding of our disability.

I cannot understand what harm it would be to ban peanuts and tree nuts from planes. It is not necessary for these products to be served and sold. People aren't going to die if they don't eat them during a flight, in fact the opposite is true, people may die if they are served. There are many, many other snack foods available in this day and age.

I would challenge those without allergies to fly on an airplane, surrounded by a poisonous substance and see how comfortable they feel. Think about it for a minute. Put yourself in that situation. Scared to touch something in case you came in contact with that poisonous substance. Scared to breathe in case you breathed in some of the poisonous substance. Trust me, you would not like it and would not want to subject yourself to it. That is what we, the allergic people, go through all the time. And this is why we are making this plea.

I am not asking for a 100% guarantee that flights are totally peanut/nut free. I realize that is unrealistic. However, by putting simple parameters in place, it will go a long way in the safety and comfort of those of us with this disability. We are not asking for something difficult here, just a simple policy and food service change. People will still fly by air, flights will be full whether the airline serves these foods or not. I cannot not remember the last time I flew on an empty WestJet flight and everyone seemed very happy. And, I have encountered very concerned people that were sitting near me when they were told I had a peanut and tree nut allergy. They were more than happy not to eat these foods.

Serving peanuts and tree nuts is NOT a requirement for flying, nor does it add to the safety or well being of passengers. Let's make these changes now and show the rest of the airline world that Canada is a progressive, compassionate country!

I ask that you seriously consider all feedback you receive on this subject. Should you require further information, I am happy to participate.

Thank you very much.

Regards,

Betty Richardson