

Hi,

My daughter has a severe peanut allergy. We have traveled a lot by airplane, but not without much anxiety. We are cautious - we wipe down her seat and anything she might touch, we offer to buy people an alternative snack if they are eating something containing peanuts nearby, we bring her food with a frozen corn package (instead of ice) to keep it cool. If possible, we fly first class where there is more room between the seats.

It would be nice to have a consistent protocol for allergies for the airlines. Westjet says they create a buffer zone and announce if there is a severe allergy on board, but, honestly, they have never done this for us. Other people have told me that it has been announced on their flights, but I have never had that experience. It seems to be at the whim of the flight attendant whether or not anything is done to make the allergic person more comfortable.

A few years ago, I was in correspondence with Westjet over an idea I had. Their response was that I should perhaps look at alternative forms of transportation (to Hawaii!) for my daughter if she was that allergic. Anyway, my idea was that maybe for popular destinations, airlines offer a couple of flights a month that are allergen-free. This does not mean the food would be guaranteed, it just means that passengers would not be allowed to bring nuts/peanuts or other major allergens on board - and they would know this at the time of booking. The first flight of the morning, when the planes are cleaner. I even suggested that the airline could charge a premium for this special flight because I KNOW many parents who would be a lot more comfortable taking their allergic child on an airplane if there was this option. And if this was the case, it would be a lot easier for the attendant to ask the passenger to put their giant bag of peanuts/nuts away.

Anyway, Food Allergy Canada asked for input, so these were my thoughts.

Thank you,

Stephanie Makrugin

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