



Airborne Food Allergies: Education Breathes Life

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Over the past decade and a half the outbreak of food allergies have presented themselves exponentially in the developing youth, and even present itself randomly in adults. It is estimated that 15 million American's suffer with food allergies. That's roughly 2 in every classroom. The need for answers, safety, and public education regarding food allergies continues to grow at a slower rate than the need for it. As food allergies become more prevalent, the need for stricter regulations on foods, food manufacturing, and public persona of food allergies falls short, and fails to protect many lives. In addition to the dangerous misconceptions about food allergy safety and deadly mistakes, there are three classes of food allergies: ingestion reactive, physical touch reactive, and airborne inhalation.

Of the 15 million Americans, 9 million (or 4% of the population) are adults, and 6 million (or 8% of the population) are children. The most accountable cause to these growing food allergies comes from the changes to the agriculture of milk, corn, and soy. The growing prevalence of farm raised fish, and inconsistencies within the allowances of pesticides and preservatives throughout international food regulations. There is a growing hypothesis. The American Academy of Pediatrics recently weighed in for the first time on organic food, as reported in the **Wall Street Journal**, suggesting that feeding kids organic fruits and veggies and organic meat reduces the risks of certain conditions and diseases, including food allergies, and have additional health and lifestyle benefits[1].

The realm of food allergies is inconsistent, unavoidable, incurable, and treated only through avoidance. That is a steep treatment plan for a new parent and a society that lacks understanding of the prevalence and reality of food allergies. As decision makers begin to enact policies to protect kids with food allergies in the classroom, there is a continued struggle to protect all kids with food allergies. The top eight food allergens that make up 90% of the food allergies in America are: milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, and soy. Peanuts are, by general consensus, classified as the most severe food allergy, and therefore most people have heard of them having an airborne reactive ability. The lack of general understanding as well as professional understanding about the airborne reactivity in the other top eight foods is a severe cause for concern among safety and wellbeing for those affected by food allergies.

Percentages of those affected by each of the top 8 allergens

- Peanuts: 1.4% of children; 0.6% of adults
- Milk: 2.5% of children; 4% of adults
- Shellfish: 0.1% of children; 2% of adults
- Tree Nuts: 1.1% of children; 1.3% of adults
- Eggs: 1.5% of children; rare occurrence in adults
- Fish: 0.1% of children; 2% of adults
- Soy: 0.4% of children; 2% of adults
- Wheat: 0.4% of children; 0.5% of adults have true allergy

Many American schools have developed standardized protocols for food allergies. In November, President Obama signed the School Access To Emergency Epinephrine Act. Many schools have created "peanut free" classrooms, but there are still countless children whose basic human needs are unable to be met in the public setting. The School Lunch Act requires schools to serve cow's milk, the most common food allergen. Therefore, children with physical contact and

airborne allergies to milk are unable to attend public schools safely. This sends the message that peanut allergies are to be taken seriously and milk allergy is not. This is with the economic cost of food allergies at nearly \$25 billion per year.

While we wait for further understanding and food allergy cures, we need a more generalized understanding of food allergies to include the top eight food allergens. Food allergies are classified under the ADA (American's with Disabilities Act) [2]. Creating a community of awareness and protection is the only hope to save the very lives that can be taken within minutes of exposure. Parents of children with life threatening, airborne food allergies are educating Physicians, Teachers, and communities in hopes of making tomorrow a better place to be with food allergies.

References:

1. Report Supports Organic Produce, but not milk as reported in the Wall Street Journal (2012); The Wall street Journal.
2. American's with Disabilities Act