

## *Personal Stories: Peanut Allergies*

*In the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking DOT asked for individual stories of serious in-flight medical problems from airborne peanut particles. The following stories of **in-flight medical problems from peanuts** were submitted to the RegulationRoom site from June 2 – August 31, 2010.*

*NOTE: The following comments have been edited to contain only the story told by the commenter. Views on how DOT should respond, or other non-narrative material, have been omitted. If you posted a comment containing a story of an inflight medical problem from peanuts and don't see that story here, please email us at: [regulationroom@cornell.edu](mailto:regulationroom@cornell.edu). Only stories that were part of comments made to the Peanut Allergy post from June 2-August 31, 2010 will be listed here.*

[raiseyourvoice](#) 6/15/2010 22:59: A few months ago, there was a family emergency at home. My choices were to drive eight hours, thereby possibly ending after a loved one had already passed, or to brave a flight with peanuts on board but that would take considerably less time. I chose the flight, taking all sorts of precautions including informing the flight attendants of my allergy. They created a "peanut-free zone" around me, serving pretzels to the passengers sitting four rows in front of me and four rows behind me. I still had a mild reaction (no use of the EpiPen, in other words, but still heavily medicated by the time I left the plane), so that when I did arrive at the hospital, I had to undergo treatment myself before visiting my loved one.

[dwein003](#) 6/28/2010 12:14: On a plane 2 years ago, when my son was 3, he came into contact the carpeting below the seat and developed hives. We looked and saw an old peanut under the seat in front of us. He has a documented peanut allergy. I suspect that there was residual peanut in the carpet that he came into contact with. I am fairly certain that this 3 year-old boy he did not get hives because he was 'stressed out'. Fortunately all he got was hives, but as best we could tell he did not have a serious ingestion (and our leg of the flight was peanut-free after we had notified the airline of his allergy at booking and check-in).

[RAPT818](#) 6/26/2010 22:59: 3 yrs ago we found out that my son (a year old at the time) had a peanut allergy. After blood tests confirmed the allergy, we took steps to make air travel "safer". Some flights were still taken without many problems while others were the cause of us no longer flying together as a family or taking cross country trips. Another commenter mentioned how SWA gave them a "peanut free" flight after they told people they had an allergy. While this is a nice idea, it's not really possible. Even if peanuts aren't served on that flight, they have been served on that plane already. After telling 3 different people that our child was SEVERELY allergic, the ground 'near' us had peanuts all over it and sent my son into an asthmatic reaction. Thankfully he did not at the time go into full anaphylactic shock, but since then his IGA levels in his blood have continued to go up. This means it is very likely that he would have a more severe reaction to exposure the next time. We stopped flying about a year and a half ago.

[Hoping4This](#) 6/15/2010 04:46: My peanut allergic son flew with me on Southwest when he was 3. I carried him in, wiped the whole area down while holding him, etc. etc. Picked up the food all around (I had let SW know about his allergy on several occasions before we boarded but nothing was done). He didn't touch one thing and he sat in his very large car seat the whole time. About 30 min. into the flight, his eyes were swollen shut and his face was bright red... just from breathing (isn't breathing a right we deserve?). I let the flight attendant know but all she

said was "I hope you have your medicine". THIS WAS A THREE YEAR OLD! It was really scary. Thankfully, I did have his medicine but I have never flown with him since.

[Sandersson](#) 6/11/2010 17:24: My son did have a reaction on one flights. He did not eat nuts, and neither did anyone in our row, we believe he came in contact with the nuts from someone who had sat in our seats on a previous flight. Luckily the reaction was not severe, we could control it with medicine, but when you have a 16 month old reacting at 35,000 feet, it can be very scary. Then next time we flew where the airline served nuts, we told them of the allergy when we bought the tickets and when we checked in. I felt very discriminated by a few comments we received from airline personnel. One flight attendant got angry that he wasn't told in advance and later blamed me when he ran out of non nut snacks when asked for a bag of pretzels (they created a "peanut free area" around us). Another flight attendant announced to the plane that they would not be serving nut products because there was a small child with a nut allergy. I felt like my family was singled out because it was a small flight and we were the only family with a small child.

[missyuh](#) 6/4/2010 00:14: We have had several unfortunate situations while traveling

- 1) my then 4 year old son having an anaphylactic shock on an overseas flight although we did avoid nuts and peanuts but another passenger consumed a product labeled "may contain peanuts" next to us.
- 2) I have myself been severely sick on an overseas flight from US to Europe –vomiting on the entire flight due to peanut exposure in the lounge.
- 3) We have several times had issues with airlines not caring about the allergies. One Continental Flight attendant once insisted on that it was a rule that she had to serve peanuts to us and everyone around us – even though we had informed them before hand that we had peanut allergies. I believe Continental since has stopped serving peanuts, but it was very unpleasant and we had to give Benadryl to our then 2 year old as he started wheezing – it was not until he was wheezing that the flight attendant was kind enough to inform the Captain and take back the peanuts!
- 4) .... on AA last year that a lady sat next to us and insisted on eating her pbj sandwiches in spite that we were 3 people with peanut allergies next to her. She didn't care and the stewardess didn't care. When we asked her to help us she wouldn't let us reseat somewhere else, she wouldn't ask the lady to eat something else (even though we offered to buy her anything) and she wouldn't ask the woman to move. She was rude and yelled that it was our problem and if our kids are so allergic we shouldn't bring them into public. Her colleague said that people with peanut allergies should hire a private jet (yet it is not all of us that would ever be able to travel if we have to do this). Our oldest boy ended up getting sick and it wasn't until then that the one of the stewardesses apologized but they still refused doing anything. They wouldn't even notify the captain of the anaphylactic shock because then everyone would get delayed.....(and the stewardess said the flight was delayed enough as is. So she chose to risk our sons life. This happened on Aug 22, 2009 with AA from DFW to EWR.
- 5) On a overseas flight we overheard the steward telling his colleagues that "I wonder how serious the boys (meaning our son) allergies are – what would happen if we just crushed up some peanuts and put them in his food?". We did complain and the airline did apologize but it still shows how people not caring are the biggest threat.

[martinezcs](#) 6/2/2010 22:14: I have two children with multiple severe food allergies. Presently We only fly airlines that do not serve peanuts or agree to not serve it on our flight (like

southwest airlines does). although, once on a southwest flight my daughter had a mild reaction. We think it was from residue from the previous flight. it was mild enough that benadryl was sufficient to control the symptoms.

[karenbarth](#) 6/23/2010 16:39: We first discovered that my son's allergy to peanuts, included air born exposure while flying on a plane. He was 5 years old and asleep and started scratching his face, which also began to swell. I looked to the back of the plane and discovered that the stewards were passing out peanuts, which everyone was popping open. I asked her to stop immediately, which she did. I gave my son Benedryl and fortunately this sufficed-this time.

[ifoltman](#) 6/23/2010 15:00: My son spent 2 days in intensive care as a small child from a true peanut reaction. For those saying that a small amount of peanuts in the air is not harmful, my child's throat closes up when he eats food that was processed in the same facility with peanuts and began this reaction on a plane with peanuts 5 rows in front of us.

[Dob](#) 7/20/2010 19:54: On a flight with American airlines I was with my sister in law that is deadly allergic to peanuts. I asked the flight attendant not to sell peanuts on the flight. She came back with the regulation book explaining that the company policy was not to accommodate her. I did clearly explain that if peanut dust is in the air it will cause her a sever assma attack. They did nothing to help us and did offer to sell peanuts on the flight. My sister in law took benadrel and was very scard for the entire flight. She did get filled up but didn't have an attack.

[iwilllive](#) 8/19/2010 02:11: During one flight in 1999, we had to make an emergency landing and I had to spend the night at the ER because of peanut dust circulating through the cabin.

[RuthLS](#) 6/8/2010 17:49: My son had what we consider an anaphylactic reaction in flight at around the age of 2 from picking up his toy on the plane floor and then rubbing his eyes. His eyes immediately swelled, he started coughing and crying. Hives developed and so on. We can only guess that there was peanut dust on the floor. Having a child and having seen a child suffer a life threatening reaction is not something I wish on anyone. Experiencing that in mid air with no access to an ambulance, ER or Dr. is beyond words.

[ShoeSlut](#) 6/3/2010 17:36: My child with a severe nut and peanut allergy had a reaction on a domestic flight. Luckily her breathing was not compromised but she broke out in hives across her entire body. I was very very close to using epi-pens on this flight and had all the flight attendants hovering around us. She only ate the safe food we brought onto the flight – nothing from the airline. I also wiped down our seating area before she boarded. However, she is very touch-sensitive and the seats are hard to clean as they are made of fabric. For the flight home we brought a sheet to cover the seats and she did not react the same way but did get a hive or two none-the-less. Peanut-residue is very hard to remove from fabric surfaces.

[Gene](#) 6/6/2010 02:00: Our daughter is even allergic to airborne peanut dust in a plane when other people open their bag of complementary peanuts in the opposite end of the plane... gasping for air and almost choking. Once she told the cabin crew about her allergy at the gate AND again when she got on the plane. The result... they gave her a handi-towel and told her to wipe the armrests of her seat off. Then, then served peanuts to everyone on the plane... even

the people sitting next to her. Should she have gotten any worse, they might have had to make an emergency landing... at whose expense???