

Airlines and Food Allergies

Airline travel is a major concern for food-allergic individuals and their families, which can increase anxiety levels for all parties involved.

It's vital for travelers to be aware and prepared when it comes to travelling safely. A recent study identified steps airline passengers can take that may prove beneficial in helping to reduce the risk of an in-flight reaction to peanuts and tree nuts:

- Make accommodation requests to the airlines
- Wipe personal tray tables
- Avoid the use of airline-provided pillows or blankets
- Request that other passengers not consume peanut/tree nut-containing products
- Do not consume airline-provided foods

How can airlines also help reduce the risk for travelers?

1. Have a clear policy that's posted on the website and train all employees on how to address and accommodate those with food allergies.
2. Refer travelers to FAACT's resources, so they can learn how to increase their safety while traveling.
3. Properly train attendants and staff on food allergy safety. This includes how to help prevent a reaction, but also how to respond to an anaphylactic emergency.
4. Allow early boarding for those with food allergies. This will allow travelers extra time to wipe down their seats, tray tables, armrests, seat belts, and surrounding areas before taking flight.
5. Make sure the passenger's luggage containing their emergency medication can be stored close to them.

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6. Notify surrounding passengers about the allergy, and ask if they mind refraining from eating the allergen during the trip. Allow seats to be changed if needed.
 7. Consider avoiding the sale or distribution of the allergen during that flight.
 8. If travelers request blankets, pillows or magazines, inform them that the allergen may be present on those items.
 9. Have the attendants kindly introduce themselves before take-off, letting the travelers know they are aware of the allergy and are available to contact with any concerns.
 10. Always encourage exiting travelers to remove their trash, and have attendants clean up any trash that may have been left behind.
 11. Consider having emergency epinephrine available on each aircraft.
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Food allergies continue to increase and allergic reactions have happened to those with no known history of an allergy.

By having a clear and consistent plan, you'll help prepare your staff for accommodating those with food allergies and know how to respond to any anaphylactic emergencies.

Reference: International Study of Risk-Mitigating Factors and In-Flight Allergic Reactions to Peanut and Tree Nut.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24565458>

For more information, visit:
FoodAllergyAwareness.org