

## allergy moms and our story

Last week, when I wrote this post about my son's peanut allergy, a reader from the Allergy Moms web site stopped by and asked if she could publish it in her newsletter. The newsletter came out this weekend, which has been bringing tons of traffic.

If you are looking for my posts on my son's peanut allergy, [click here](#)

Meanwhile, this is our story of how peanuts landed us in private school:

As kindergarten loomed for our oldest son, we had debated for months the option of sending our children to a private Christian school. But we made up our minds. Too expensive. Too far. We both went to public school, and our children would, too.

The public school down the street had a kindergarten sneak peek allowing moms and their children to stop by and check out the classroom. I had grown accustomed to the peanut-free standards at the preschool my son had attended the past two years, and I guessed a public school would be even

So, as I walked out of the classroom that day, I casually said to the teacher, "Now, the school is peanut-free, right?"

"Well, sort of," she replied.

Sort of? WHAT exactly does that mean?

A few phone calls with the teacher, the nurse, and the principal shed some light on the situation:

Nine hundreds kids in the building.

If they forget a lunch, they are given a peanut butter sandwich.

Kids can bring any home-baked good they want for their birthday.

Oh... and the class does make a Chex mix around Christmas time, but they could leave out the nuts this year.

The next afternoon, my neighbor stopped by on a walk with her daughter.

"I'm so happy that your son is in Megan's class. Megan is so excited about kindergarten that I already purchased her snack for her "special day". I got her favorite thing. Peanuts."

Peanuts?

Was that a bolt of lightening that just struck me in the head?

My son did attend the first day of kindergarten at the public school, and he and I both cried the whole time. There was nothing wrong with the school. But we both had a horrible sinking feeling in our gut that this was not the best situation for him. I called the private school we had been considering and asked if they had an opening.

"Oh, and by the way. My son has a severe peanut allergy. Are you equipped to handle that?"

Let me call you back.

That school didn't start until a week after the public school. While our school of choice took the matter before their board, we called in sick at the first school. We visited, and almost enrolled in another private kindergarten that had extremely high standards for allergies. But it was only a preschool and kindergarten, so it would be a temporary solution.

And we had numerous discussions with the other school.

They didn't have a nurse on staff, so who would administer the epi-pen? They didn't have any other children with severe allergies. How would this work? Quite frankly, they just weren't quite sure if they could handle us . And we weren't quite sure we could handle them .

For the first time in my young child's life, I realized what we were dealing with could be considered a disability. And it hit me that our choices were limited because of peanuts. And suddenly, I felt tremendous compassion for other families with children with a special need.

Maybe it's a physical need? Autism? Downs Syndrome? A developmental delay?

These families don't have the same choices other families do. They can't choose to send their child to a private school just because they want to. They have to make extra plans and preparations every time they take their children to the park or the pool or the zoo to keep them safe. And so did we. Because of peanuts. Because of a stupid, stinky, greasy legume that isn't even really a nut.

The board at our school did let my son attend. We have been trailblazers in establishing a peanut-free table at lunch, educating the teachers on allergies and instructing staff on the use of the epi-pen. We have taught all of the students in the school that if they eat peanuts or nuts, they must wash their hands immediately after eating.

This has been a tremendous learning experience for the students at my son's school. They are learning to look out for the needs of others. They are learning that no matter WHERE they are in society -- the park, an airplane, or a shopping mall -- that the peanut butter that is so yummy to them can be deadly to another child. It only takes a minute to wash. your. hands.

We don't worry about sending our son to school each day. He is in class of 14 students where his teacher is highly aware of his needs and concerned about his safety.

But I've also learned that we can't control everything. We don't know if someone came to school with peanut butter on his hands that morning. We don't know if someone forgot to clean his hands after eating a PB&J. And even recent newspaper reports have revealed that the foods we assumed are safe, might not be properly labeled.

The worry could drive us out of our minds.

We trust God to help. Just as we pray each morning for the safety of our other two children, we trust Him to protect our oldest son.

From peanuts.

Anonymous said...

I really enjoyed your thoughts on birthday treats at school that I read at AllergyMoms. My son also has Rice Krispie treats in his teacher's drawer and we have also had to help a small Catholic school learn to deal with a peanut allergy. He's now in his second year at this school and it's so nice as we see the progress we've made at educating the teachers, students and parents about the allergy.

Jenny said...

You just never realize how hard something like a peanut allergy must be for a family. Like you said, it could be any number of "disabilities" that a family is trying to deal with and educate others on. I can see how important it is to be sensitive to the needs of others and I will try to be better.

Anonymous said...

Holy!! I have heard of peanut allergies before but not to the extent of your story... makes the little hairs on the back of my neck stand up in worry & empathy... wow. We are a peanut free school here & I will be taking it way more seriously now...

Thanks for the insight!

Laurel

## About the Author

Resources of legume allergy symptoms for those interested in mrsa

Birch pollen-related food allergy to legumes : identification and

Legume Allergies - Topix

Allergen Bureau - Less common and 'emerging' food allergens

Pediatric Allergy & Immunology - Fulltext: Volume 16(6) September

Go Ask Alice!: Allergic to peanuts = allergic to pecans?

Birch pollen-related food allergy to legumes : identification and

Allergy & Asthma Disease Management Center: Ask the Expert

Soy Allergy Symptoms

BiomedExperts: Prevalence of legume sensitization in patients with

Source: <http://productsherbal.com>