

Allergy & Asthma E-Bulletin

CONNECTING CANADIANS WITH ANAPHYLAXIS, ALLERGIES AND ASTHMA

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Top 10 Reasons to Give

By Sharon Lee, Executive Director, Allergy/Asthma Information Association (AAIA)

The English dictionary defines charity as the voluntary giving of help. In many cases charity is monetary and is often fulfilling for the person who makes the donation. In today's world where there are so many worthy causes, donating to charity is considered a noble act. It is imperative that we try and be of service to our fellow man. Charity does not always imply the giving away of money, one can give away anything to someone in need. People donate cars, books, clothes and even food in the name of charity and it also has its own benefits. It is not always that a person can afford to donate to charity but as a citizen of this world one should always look to give when they have more than what they need. Let us now look at the top ten reasons to donate to charity.

1. Grow your own self worth

Donating to charity will help a person add to their own self-worth. It is not often that one gets a chance to help a fellow being but when a person does get a chance it is a fulfilling exercise. It can help increase a person's self-worth in many ways. However, it should not be out of the need for self-worth that one should donate, instead it should be a sincere desire to help someone in need.

2. Helps earn respect

Donations can help you earn respect in many areas. Philanthropy is a noble act that only people with a good heart can fall into and it also earns you a lot of respect from your peers and society in general. Other than that, it will also earn you the undying respect of the people or organizations that you donate to.

3. Charity boosts motivation

Charity will help you boost your own motivation to go further in life. A lot of people all around the world work diligently towards the charities that they have an interest in. Since it is a very fulfilling act to give, it will help you add to your own personal motivation too. People who donate are often driven to donate more and a person can only donate more if they have more.

4. An opportunity to give something back

Charity is a wonderful opportunity to give back to the world that we take so much from. Charity can be given to your old community, your old school or even your old neighborhood. It is also a sign that you have not forgotten where you come from and are grateful to your past.

5. Charity reflects on your own inner values

For many people, charity is a direct reflection of their own inner values. It is a deeply fulfilling exercise to be able to give to a cause that you are passionate about. In many cases, people reflect on their own challenges and give away to charities because they can relate to a cause. It also offers an insight into your own self and the areas where you could improve and get help.

6. A great way to commemorate love

Love is a much needed emotion in today's world and it is always welcomed. Love for a fellow being is a sublime emotion that everyone should inculcate. It is a great way of cashing in on your own moral savings. Many people donate to charities that they are

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passionate about, they also donate to remember a loved one. It is one of the best ways to show the world that you do indeed care about something.

7. Great way to publicize oneself

Although it should not be the primary motive behind making a donation, it is a great way to publicize you. If you are planning on philanthropy then giving away to a charity that you care about is a great way to let people know of your intentions. It is also a good way to get some positive reviews on you in society.

8. Helps you meet like-minded and interesting people

Donation simply does not mean that you give away something material. Many people volunteer for charities and spend time working at different organizations or even on their own. This form of charity is also a great way to give and you get to meet like-minded people who share the same interests.

9. Tax benefits

Tax benefits may encourage people to make a charitable donation. Most charitable organizations provide their benefactors with a potential tax-saving option by issuing tax receipts for monetary donations.

10. Because you can

The most important reason of all as to why you should donate to charity is because you can. At AAIA, we help individuals cope with allergies, asthma and anaphylaxis.

AAIA's mission is to create safer environments and improve quality of life for Canadians affected by allergy, asthma, and anaphylaxis by empowering individuals and providing education, leadership, and a national voice.

Please donate today at <https://www.canadahelps.org/dn/3027>

The ABCs of Drug Allergies

By: Ghasak Hussain, B.Sc. B.Pharm Candidate.

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Are you allergic to any drugs? It's a question that you've likely been asked a number of times by various healthcare professionals throughout your life: nurses, pharmacists, dentists, and physicians. It may seem redundant, but for some people, it can be a life-saving question. Drug allergies are more common than you might think; it can affect up to 1 in 10 people. But what exactly is a drug allergy? Before we dive in, it is important to understand the difference between an intolerance and an allergy.

When most people use the word allergy, what they are really referring to is intolerance. An intolerance is an unpleasant side effect of a drug— it usually only involves one part of your body. For example, if Advil gives you stomach aches, that would be classified as an intolerance. Common drugs that cause intolerances include antibiotics, ibuprofen, and acetaminophen. Drug allergies, on the other hand, affect the whole body. They tend to be more serious because they involve your body's defence system. The symptoms can be immediate after taking the drug or can take several days to appear. Side effects can range from mild reactions, like a skin rash, or more serious, like tongue swelling and difficulty breathing. These serious reactions are called anaphylactic reactions and can be life-threatening. A common drug that can trigger serious allergic reactions in some people is penicillin.

There are some people who are more likely to experience drug allergies. Allergies to drugs typically happen more in middle-aged people, with women being affected more than men. If you have asthma or certain infections, like HIV and the Epstein-Barr virus (EBV), you are also more likely to experience a reaction from a drug. Genetic factors also play a role.

Depending on the severity of the reaction, treating a drug allergy doesn't have to be any different than treating a seasonal allergy. If you suspect that you are allergic to a new medication, seek help from your pharmacist. It is important to seek help immediately, even if you are unsure, as diagnosing a drug allergy is sometimes difficult. For mild reactions like a rash, your pharmacist can recommend over-the-counter medications like diphenhydramine, or topical creams like hydrocortisone to relieve itchiness and swelling. Depending on your reaction, your pharmacist may also advise you to stop taking the medication and avoid the drug. If you think you may be experiencing an anaphylactic reaction, it is important to go to the emergency room as soon as possible. This is a medical emergency and this drug must definitely be avoided in the future.

As with any allergy, it is important to educate yourself so you can avoid experiencing a reaction again. You and your family members should be able to identify both the brand and generic name of the drug you are allergic to. If you experienced a serious drug allergy, you should consider carrying a Medic Alert® card or wearing a bracelet to avoid being given the drug in the future. With proper education and help from your healthcare team, you can be on the road to a healthier you.

Editor's Note: Remember to keep your doctor informed about any allergic reactions or intolerances to medications.

The strategies that peanut and nut-allergic consumers employ to remain safe when travelling abroad

Julie Barnett, Neil Botting, M Hazel Gowland and Jane S Lucas

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The full article was published in *Clinical and Translational Allergy* 2012, 2:12 and can be found at <http://www.ctajournal.com/content/2/1/12>.

Background

An understanding of the management strategies used by food allergic individuals is needed as a prerequisite to improving avoidance and enhancing quality of life. Travel abroad is a high risk time for severe and fatal food allergic reactions, but there is paucity of research concerning foreign travel. This study is the first to investigate the experiences of, and strategies used by peanut and tree nut allergic individuals when travelling abroad.

Excerpts

Travel abroad was considered difficult with inherent risks for allergic individuals. Many participants recounted difficulties with airlines or restaurants. Inconsistency in managing allergen avoidance by airlines was a particular risk and a cause of frustration to participants. Individuals used a variety of strategies to remain safe including visiting familiar environments, limiting their activities, carrying allergy information cards in the host language, preparing their own food and staying close to medical facilities.

Note: Allergen avoidance strategies were mostly extensions or modifications of the strategies that individuals use when eating at home or eating out in the UK.

The extended strategies reflected their recognition of enhanced risk during travel abroad. Their risk assessments and actions were generally well informed and appropriate. A need for airline policy regarding allergy to be declared and adhered to is needed, as is more research to quantify the true risks of airborne allergens in the cabin. Recommendations arising from our study are presented. Go to www.ctajournal.com/content/2/1/12/table/T1.

Importantly, in one study 9% of participants reported adverse reactions on aircraft, 80% of which were moderate or severe. Another study suggested that only 38% of patients who requested special consideration from an airline due to food allergy actually received satisfactory assistance. The difficulties of air travel for food allergic individuals, are confirmed by a survey of in-flight paediatric medical emergencies which reported that 9% were due to allergic reactions.

Surviving Flights with Pet Allergies

By Braden Chow, Volunteer, Prairies Region

Vacations for those with allergies can be quite stressful. One must make a number of considerations between accommodations, activities, and packing. Travelling by plane is a haphazard activity since most major airlines, such as Air Canada, WestJet, and Lufthansa, allow travel with pets in the cabin. This combined with allergies can create a difficult start (or end) to a vacation.

To assist with having a more relaxing and less stressful flight, I have compiled some guidelines.

- Consult a doctor about your travel plans. A doctor can help prepare you for possible allergic reactions that you may encounter on your travels and may provide prescriptions and / or suggestions for prevention and treatment of reactions.

- Contact the airline at least 48 hours before your flight to talk about your allergies. If you have a severe allergy, you can contact an airline's medical hotline to request a buffer zone around your seat where they will not allow guests with pets. You may wish to check with the airline prior to seeing a doctor as some airlines will require that you provide medical documentation when requesting a buffer zone.
 - If you do not meet the requirements for a buffer zone, consider selecting seats in exit or bulkhead rows as some airlines will not seat pet owners in these rows.
- Consider earlier day flights. Cabins are only lightly cleaned between flights but are given a thorough cleaning at the end of each day. Earlier flights are less likely to have any remaining allergens.
- If it fits within the vacation budget, consider upgrading to business class seating. These seats generally provide greater distance between seats and provide greater distance between yourself and any pets.
- Pack medications and cleaning supplies in your carry-on bag. Medications such as epinephrine, antihistamines, and asthma inhalers need to be immediately available to you during your flight. Also consider bringing wet wipes to wipe down the tray table and arm rests.
- Alert all staff members of the airlines of your allergy such as the reservation agent, ticket agent, and flight attendants. They may be able to provide additional accommodations for your allergies. Ticket agents and flight attendants in particular may help arrange an unofficial buffer zone if other passengers are willing to move seats.
 - Ask the reservation agent if any passengers with pets have checked in prior and if they are near your seat. If so, you may be able to move seats prior to boarding to one further away from the pets.
 - If you are seated near an individual with a pet, consider asking the flight attendant if you can switch seats with another passenger (or move to an empty seat in the case of a non-sold out flight).
- Some passengers may understand the situation and will move to put some distance between yourself and the pet.
- If you have a severe allergy, you may want to talk to those near your seat. Let them know how to respond and assist you if you have an allergic reaction.
- In the worst case scenario, you can ask the reservation agent if you can change flights.
- Be aware that it is nearly impossible to remove all pet dander on a flight. Pet allergens on clothing can cause reactions regardless of other precautions. Service animals are allowed on all flights by law. Pets may be restricted to a certain number per flight depending on the airline.
- Familiarize yourself with alternatives and your rights as a passenger with an allergy on the airlines you are flying. Some airlines will provide refunds or book an alternate flight for you if they are unable to provide provisions for passengers with allergies.

Editor's Note

The above options may not be available with all airlines or on all flights. Be sure to check the policy of the airline you will be travelling on. As well, some planes may be cleaned on a different schedule than that noted above.

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