

The Question: Do employees with peanut allergy have any "rights" with respect to the workplace? For example, is there any legislation that requires cafeterias to provide peanut-free food, or employees to refrain from bringing peanuts or peanut products to work?

Response from a person with allergies taken with approval from the CCOHS List serves.

I am a person who had to deal with that type of allergy since I was 9 months old... so I can at least bring a human buy-in on the subject:

It is not a question of rights, it is more a question of comfort for the employee and certainly a certain liability issue from the employer... and food provider !

While we all know now that because of lawyers, ANY food ingredient list bear the mention "may have been in contact with nuts or peanuts", the point is: Shall we make an EFFORT (not because it is the law, but as professionals we want a "safer workplace".

From my personal experience, this will start with the allergic person:

1. Does he or she carry an EpiPen and a Medic-Alert bracelet ?
2. Does he or she told people around of the condition and what is an anaphylactic shock (and how SERIOUS this is ?)
3. How sensitive is the person to peanut (what I mean is :How many time did she or he had a reaction ? The seriousness of the reaction steeply increase with the number of time...)

Then the employer kicks in:

1. Can the employer make sure that at least ONE meal is OK ? (By that I mean in a due diligence way)
2. Can the employer exchange in a formal way with the employee a certain "policy" on allergy and a free dialogue can result from it...?
3. Can the employer make an awareness campaign on allergies to inform people?

And so on...

I am very tolerant and I don` t ask people NOT to bring peanuts to work. I managed with time to stay clear of peanuts lovers...

But I am sure we can do something EVEN if there is no regs.... After all we saw a debate on the "perfume free" environments, what can prevent to have the same for a peanut free environment ? After all someone can die from a peanut allergy, much lower possibility from perfume...And people can get incomed from the scent of peanuts (triggers asthma) without even eating it...I remember some airplaine travels a couple of years ago..the air would simply saturate with peanut smell and I had to knock me off with Benadryl pills...You see, I am a real pro with my peanut allergy but PLEASE, you can also make an effort. Asking the person to bring his-her own lunch is certainly NOT the best solution...

Information and education is part of the solution. My mother in law thought it was in my head for many years as she did not have anyone around suffering from serious food allergies...I still love my mother in law :) My two cents only