

Something to Chew On

What is it like to live with a food allergy? These kids share their real-life stories.

A Second Pair of Eyes

by Lisa, 16, allergic to milk and eggs

I know that sometimes your friends just don't understand when it comes to your food allergies. But one time a friend was of great help in ending a situation that could have been disastrous. I was on a trip with three other girls from my dance studio. My mom was the chaperone so she could make sure I was eating the right things. She made us taco salad one night. I made sure to serve myself first to avoid cross-contamination [when a safe food comes into contact with a food that is not safe for a person to eat]. Most of us went back for seconds. As I was absentmindedly putting more chips on my plate, another girl saw some cheese in the chips bag. She quickly showed me. I felt stupid for not paying attention, but I was so grateful that she was aware of my food allergies. She saved me from having a reaction that could have been fatal.



Sleeping Bags, Special People and Dehydrated Food

by Alison, 16, allergic to milk and eggs

I've had severe allergies to milk and eggs all my life, but that has never stopped me from doing what I wanted to do. I've been able to participate in activities, thanks to some very special people. Every summer, my Girl Scout troop goes on a trip, and I wanted to go. We tried out a lot of prepackaged, dehydrated foods, and the ones that were safe for me to eat we took on the trip. My mom and I talked to the trip leaders to make sure that the meals they would make would be safe for me. On the trip, we sometimes cooked two separate meals, one that was safe for me and one that was not. I had tons of fun all week long, and I had no trouble with my allergies.



Who I Am

by Len, 13, allergic to peanuts, legumes, soy and tree nuts

Before I overcame my fear of peanuts, I felt that I was very different. My perception was that my whole life centered on my allergy. When I was around 7 or 8 years old, I would introduce myself by saying, "Hi, I'm Len. I have a peanut allergy." Through the years, I have changed quite a lot about the way I deal with peanuts. In first and second grade, I ate lunch at a mini table on a stage in the cafeteria. It certainly drew attention to my allergy. In third grade, I mingled at a table with children selected to sit with me due to the fact that they didn't bring peanut butter. In fourth grade at a new school, I went back to sitting at a separate table. The next year, I felt I didn't need my little table. I was comfortable sitting at the end seat with a group of my friends. In sixth grade, I mingled with friends at a regular table. From being a kid scared silly of peanuts, I am now an independent and food-conscious teenager. I always carry my medication. And I like who I am.

Do you have a story about living with a food allergy?

E-mail it to **The Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network** at teens@foodallergymail.org.

Story text adapted from *Stories from the Heart, Volumes I and II*, collected by The Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network