

Living with allergies

LaVerne ~ I am 61 years old. I have been "allergic to the world" since I was born. I am unable to drink white cow's milk, and had goat's milk when I was a baby. Soy substitutes were merely a gleam in their makers' eyes in 1947. I have never been able to eat fish or shellfish or any type seafood. In fact, I can't breathe the air when fish or seafood is being fried due the molecules in the air that invade my airways. I am allergic to most types evergreens, a whole host of flowers, especially ragweed, hollyhocks, hay and grasses. I am allergic to most animals' hair and dander ...

I was not placed at a special table to eat my lunch when in school. I am grateful for this - there are enough challenges in the school yard, children don't need to be but so special with their peers.

That being said, obviously allergies have affected my life. I have asthma, and have had all my life. I also have eczema, and have had all my life. I now have Lupus and Avascular Necrosis. Lupus is a result of an impaired immune system. The basis of allergies. Avascular Necrosis is a result of using the anti-inflammatory steroid medications that became the standard treatment for allergy and asthma attacks approximately 30 years ago.

I am writing this to advise the parents who are so worried about their child's peanut and other allergies and want them wrapped in cotton-wool whenever they are not at home. Let your children be children. Let them experience some of the effects of their allergies so they are not unduly frightened should these effects come on them unawares. And discuss THOROUGHLY with your pediatricians and doctors ALL the side affects of using steroids.

I would trade some difficult moments breathing for bones that are dying and for which there is no treatment or cure.

I have found the near hysteria regarding childhood allergies to be puzzling and disturbing. I do know that there are persons for whom allergies can be life threatening. Certainly my fish/seafood allergy has that potential for me. Yet, I am 61 years old. And I made it here without special tables at lunch, teachers forced to learn how to administer subcutaneous and intravenous hypodermic injections, and school boards harried by parents.

Every allergy is not life threatening. They don't have to be life limiting. Yes, I often have a stuffy nose. I sometimes find I have to use my rescue inhaler. And I have sometimes had to return a dish at a restaurant because my dish was prepared on the same space, or with the same utensils as a fish dish. I once had to return a sizzling rice soup because the waiter had misunderstood my instruction not to include fish, he included all the shellfish and sea food. It taught me to be specific.

When I was a kid, even though I couldn't run the 400 yard or mile, I was a heck of a sprinter and relay race runner. I could do the short distances. I played with all the kids in my neighborhood, and we played baseball, sledged down hills, went ice skating, roller skating, bike riding, all the things kids do. Please let your children be children. All children are special, because they are children. Please don't make your child any more different than nature has forced them to be.

There are going to ups and downs and incidents. If, as parents, you don't let yourselves become hysterical and overwrought, your children will learn to deal with their limitations just as all people do.