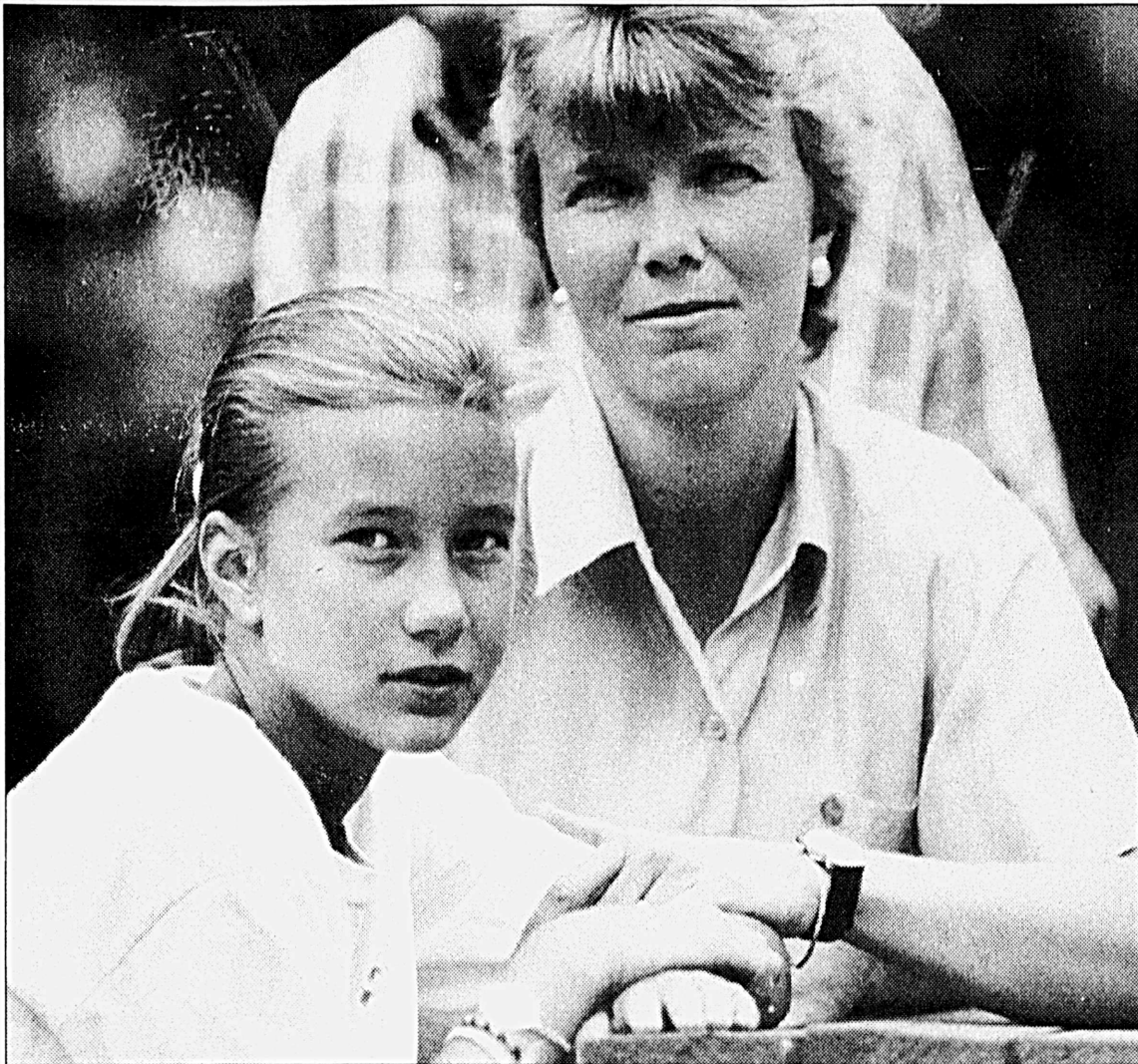


HEALTH



Megan Boyes has banned all peanut products from the house to protect her daughter Lindsay. Recently a trace of peanut butter left on a knife used to make a jam sandwich killed a teenager on a camping trip.

Peanuts: Deadly delight

by TRISH CRAWFORD
SouthamStar Network
TORONTO (CP) — Beth Goldstein's son Ben was only five years old when she told him the facts of life. And it wasn't about the birds and the bees.

"I told him he could die if he ate peanuts. It broke my heart, and it changed his little life."

Ben recently ran home from a friend's house in a panic when the neighbor started munching on a peanut snack.

But Goldstein has no intention of relaxing her vigilance on the peanut issue, which has included asking the school to ban peanut butter from lunch boxes, because death does lurk around the corner for children like Ben.

Carrie Gordon, 14, of Toronto died recently on a school camping trip after a trace of peanut butter contaminated her jam sandwich.

Just a trace, but it killed her in front of her horrified fellow campers. She wasn't carrying an adrenalin kit usually used to counteract the allergic reaction.

Carrie's death dramatically illustrates the precarious balancing act parents of allergic children face

every day as they struggle to provide their kids with as normal a lifestyle as possible.

Megan Boyes's daughter Lindsay, 10, was diagnosed as severely allergic to peanuts four years ago. But Boyes is still enrolling Lindsay in camp, and plans a trip to Disney World soon.

"We take all the precautions. But you can get hit by a bus crossing the street, that's life. We don't want her so paranoid she can't enjoy life."

Still, the sudden death of a child at camp has frightened parents of severely allergic children as never before.

"This is a terrible day for us," said Marilyn Allen. "Since my daughter died, we've spent 4 years trying to make people aware that we are not talking about a sneeze. It's life or death."

Allen's daughter Robyn had merely been alerted she had an allergy to peanuts and warned to stay away from them.

Allen had no idea Robyn was facing a life-threatening allergy until the teen collapsed in her arms outside a school gymnasium. Robyn had eaten a grilled cheese

sandwich made with butter that was also used to make peanut butter sandwiches.

Allen discovered her daughter had an undiagnosed case of anaphylaxis. That is a potentially life-threatening allergic reaction most frequently associated with foods like peanuts (which are legumes), nuts, fish, shellfish, eggs, milk and wheat.

Bee and other insect stings as well as some medications also cause the condition.

An anaphylactic reaction includes itchiness, hives, swelling of the tongue, lips and throat, shortness of breath, wheezing, chest tightness, dizziness, vomiting, abdominal pain and diarrhea.

Fifty Canadians die of anaphylactic reactions each year (50,000 have the condition) and Allen says the vast majority are carefree children or teenagers.

"We want them to have a healthy paranoia, it's the best defence they have," says Allen, who founded the Anaphylaxis Project after Robyn's death. The information group has grown to 600 members in Ontario in four years.

All you need to know about allergies

By Canadian Press

Facts about life-threatening allergic reactions:

WHAT ARE THEY? Anaphylactic reactions are severe and sometimes fatal allergic responses to drugs, vaccines, foods (including peanuts, shellfish, eggs, berries and milk), insect venom or chemicals:

WHO'S AFFECTED? About 50,000 Canadians have anaphylactic reactions each year and 50 die.

HOW DOES THE REACTION WORK? The allergen enters the blood and triggers the release of histamine, a compound found in cells. Histamine causes dilation of capillaries, decreased blood pressure, increased secretion of gastric juice and constriction of air passages and the uterus.

SYMPTOMS: Anaphylactic shock can occur within seconds or minutes after exposure to an allergen. First symptoms are intense anxiety, weakness, sweating and shortness of breath that may lead to breathing failure and death. Other symptoms may include congestion, nausea and diarrhea and drop in blood pressure that can lead to collapse and death.

TREATMENT: Carry portable syringes (Epi-Pen or Anakit are kits available by prescription) loaded with the drug epinephrine, which counteracts the drop in blood pressure and bronchial spasm.

Effects may wear off after five minutes, so carry two or three, then get to hospital for monitoring of low blood pressure. Treatment may include blood transfusion or other ways to increase blood volume.

TIPS: Wear a medical alert bracelet or necklace identifying the allergy. Read all ingredient lists in food. Be on guard when eating away from home. Carry emergency syringe kits at all times. Check the kit's expiry date. Make sure schools, camps and other sites are equipped with kits.

Sources: Mosby's Medical Dictionary; Dr. Bhiku Jethalal, an allergist and consultant at Scarborough Grace Hospital in Toronto; Allergy-Asthma Information Association.



Did you know Children's volunteer interpreters provide services in Mandarin, Cantonese, Spanish, Punjabi, Hindi, Vietnamese and many other languages?



Jobs, Jobs, Jobs



It's every politician's promise, but the fact remains: There's too much competition for too few openings. Unemployment remains the No. 1 concern of Canadians.

Another group of high school graduates is getting ready to enter the workplace, but will they?

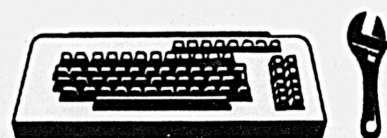
Prospects are slim when more than 25 per cent of people 25 and younger are unemployed. They're competing for jobs against experienced workers in their 30s, 40s and even 50s who have also suddenly found themselves out of work.

The Prince George Citizen Is Helping!

The Citizen has launched Workplace, a section devoted to employing the unemployed, offering weekly ideas, tips, trends and job prospects.

From writing resumes and handling job interviews to launching your own business, we'll cover it in the coming weeks in Workplace, every Tuesday.

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