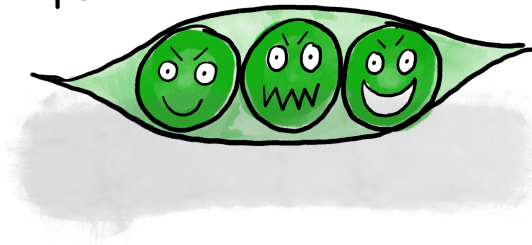


I ALMOST DIED EATING A PEA!

Chapter One

Peas are evil!



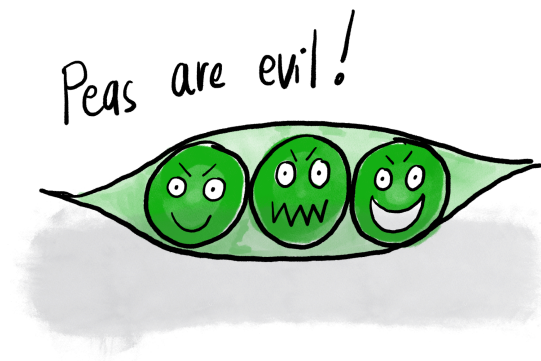
By Chris Soul
With illustrations by Rosie Soul

Raising awareness for Anaphylaxis UK as part of Chris Soul's London
Marathon 2024 fundraising:

<https://2024tcslondonmarathon.enthuse.com/pf/chris-soul>

Chapter One

When I was about one years old, I almost died eating a pea.



Well, it wasn't actually a pea, but a pea protein. It was used as an ingredient in a vegan cheese on a pizza. But it was probably about the equivalent of a pea size, yeah. Maybe even smaller. Maybe like a speck.

You might think that sounds funny or stupid or not even possible. Let me tell you. It is possible to almost die from a pea (protein). It's not funny either. And there's definitely not anything stupid about it, apart from maybe the restaurant being stupid because they didn't check the ingredients properly.

Anyway, I almost died from eating a tiny speck of pea protein in a cheese. You see, *my name is Susie Valentina and I have multiple allergies.* Mum used to list them all off to waiters and waitresses for them to check.

"Susie is allergic to: peanuts, tree nuts, eggs, milk, lentils, beans and peas. Check for pea protein. Oh, she's also allergic to cat saliva, but, erm, I'm assuming that's not an ingredient you use here..."

"No. We don't use cat saliva in any of our dishes."

"Great! So have you got it?"

"Sorry?"

"The allergies?"

"Yes, madam."

"But you didn't write it down. Listen again. Write it down, please. **Susie is allergic to: peanuts, tree nuts, eggs, milk, lentils, beans and peas. Check for pea protein.**"

"Right."



Eventually Mum designed her own poster and laminated it so she could give the list of allergies directly to the servers or even the chef. She's pretty amazing, my Mum. She added pictures to the poster and even danger signs. Some waiters and waitresses have looked pretty scared by it, but, to be fair, everyone needs to take it seriously. Sometimes I wonder if I need a flashing sign above my head with something like: '*SOME FOODS CAN KILL ME!*' 'Bit much? Maybe.

Now that I'm older (I'm nine, by the way), I can give them the poster myself and tell them everything too. Mum's proud of me for beginning to 'vouch for myself', but I know I need to help myself more.

People don't realise how hard it can be to have allergies, and *loads* of them. Everywhere you go and everywhere you eat, you have to check every ingredient. You have to clean down tables, in case crumbs of nuts or spills of milk have been left by

people who don't clean up after themselves!

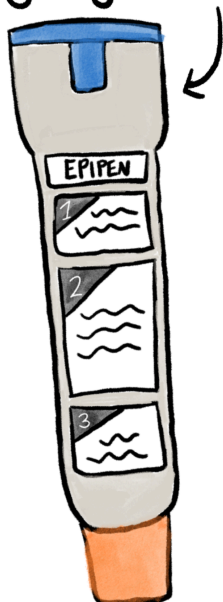
You have to take antihistamine medicines everywhere to calm any reactions. And you have to take adrenaline pens everywhere in little orange zip up bags.

Why? Because I can die from a pea! You might think this is an overreaction, yeah, but you have to understand.

When I was about one years old, this is what happened. It's happened to me since too, but thankfully very rarely and it's sort-of under control (I think). Though anything can happen, like, anytime.

When I ate the pea protein I got a funny taste in my mouth. It was like I had eaten stinging nettles. And then I got hives, like bumpy allergic spots, around my mouth and down my body. Like all over my body. Like I'd fallen in stinging nettles too. Imagine! Then I started to cry and my face got blotchy and my lips turned blue. I vomited the pizza up. And then it felt like my throat was closing up. I couldn't breathe. I was going to die.

Emergency medicine



Dad laid me down and Mum got my adrenaline pen. She stabbed it into my thigh until there was a click. My special pen is like a needle or a syringe, pumping my body with adrenaline to fight off the reaction.

My heart accelerated. Mum counted to ten. Then she pulled the pen out. Dad was on the phone to get an ambulance. My heart was racing but I could feel air gushing into my airways.

The paramedics arrived and took me in the ambulance, sirens

wailing. I had to stay at the hospital overnight for monitoring, just in case I had another reaction.

What happened to me was called **anaphylaxis**. It's a complex sounding word, right? It's a word that means life or death to me. For just eating a pea. Well, pea protein. So you better learn about **anaphylaxis** and how to spell it (to be fair, I still can't).

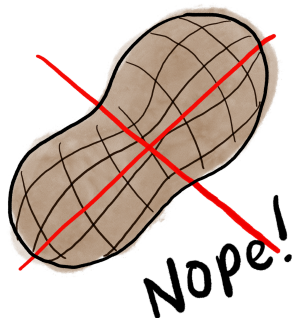
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anaphylaxis!

If it weren't for Mum and Dad I might not be here today.

As I get older, it's sometimes easier to live with my allergies and sometimes harder. I just didn't realise that sticking up for myself at school and working on my friendships would also mean dealing with my allergies too.

But how can a pea get in the way of friendship?

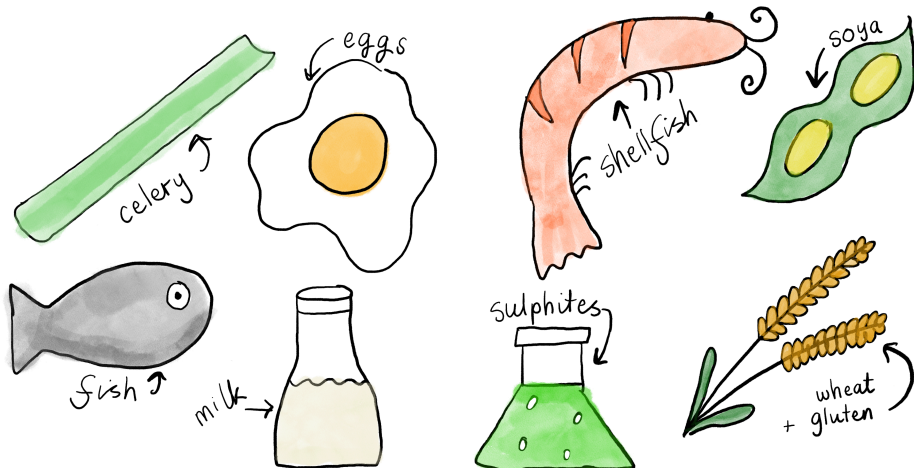
Susie's Guidebook to Allergies and Anaphylaxis Part 1: The 14 Major Allergens



Most people have heard of nut allergies, right? My school bans having nuts in the building. It would be nuts not to! But it's bananas that a lot of people (my friends included) don't have a scooby doo that there are, like, loads more allergies than just to nuts - including bananas!

In the UK, food allergen labelling regulations (the law, right?) says that there are 14 foods that are the most common causes of food allergies and intolerances. An intolerance is, like, less severe than an allergy but can still make you feel pretty rubbish.

The main 14 allergens are celery, egg, fish, lupin, milk, mustard, peanuts and tree nuts, sesame, shellfish (crustaceans & molluscs) soya, sulphites, and wheat (cereals containing gluten).



But the law people will probably add more. There used to be less than 14.

BUT! There are also foods not in the top 14 allergens that can still cause allergic reactions. Get this! They are alpha-gal... Okay? What's that? It's basically an allergy to red meat that is brought on by a tick biting you. Woah. Who knew?... Banana, buckwheat, fruit, kiwifruit, legumes & pulses, lipid transfer proteins... Yeah. Another weird one! These lipid transfer proteins are found in plants... onion and garlic, pollen food syndrome... being hyper-sensitive to plants in a different way... Quorn, seeds and vegetables. Imagine being allergic to vegetables or fruit or onions? What if you want to be a vegan so you want to eat Quorn, but what if you're allergic to Quorn? Allergies can be a real mindfield! Oh, and pea protein!



Sometimes I think it shouldn't feel this hard to want to eat something.

For lots of people like me, though, eating can be mega worrisome.

So swot up people! Learn this stuff.

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