

Nooit de deur uit zonder de epi-pen

Never leave the door without the EpiPen

As a toddler she was diagnosed: food allergy in the worst form. When Beatrijs (25) eats nuts or peanuts, her body reacts with an acute allergic rejection reaction. It can be life-threatening.

"Because my food allergy can be so dangerous, I have to be very alert. So a different lifestyle. A lot of things are no problem, as long as I communicate well when I eat something. If there is a brownie with the coffee, then I first ask if there are nuts or peanuts in it. When I get an allergic attack, my organs swell up within ten minutes. My trachea closes, so I can suffocate. My heartbeat is also slowing down. Eventually, if nothing happens, I die. So I have to intervene immediately.

Always my epipen with me

If I have only received a small amount of nuts or peanuts, I first take an antihistamine pill. Then I have to sit very quietly, the reaction may drop. If it does not move away, I always have my epi pen with me. That is an injection with adrenaline to keep my heart rate going. It gives me a little more time to go to the hospital. Or at least get in the ambulance, because they can help me there. Yet I do not feel like a patient at all, I do not see myself like that. Sometimes I might play down a bit, but an allergic reaction can happen. You can not avoid that. And I must not do that either, because then I will not have life anymore.

Allergy from a young age

When I was one and a half years old, my parents discovered my allergy. They were with me at a birthday party where I had already found a cocktail nut and put it in my mouth. Moments later my whole body was red and swollen. They rushed me to the hospital. It turned out to be a nut allergy. The heaviest form, anaphylaxis is called that. My parents themselves have no allergies, neither my brother nor two sisters. I am the only one in our family.

Always say what you have

My parents were very sober, they said: you can not eat this, because then you get pain in your stomach. For a child that is ready as a lump. I am still grateful that they were so consistent and strict in it. It was precisely through these rules that I received few attacks. They have poured me in the spoon to always communicate. When I was three years old I told everyone what would happen if I ate nuts or peanuts. That I then had to go to the hospital to get a shot there. That is why it has become so natural for me. I am not the allergy patient, I have an allergy with adapted lifestyle.

Live now

I think I was much stricter than I am now. I often drink coffee or eat out with friends in Rotterdam, where I study. You have a lot of cultures there, including food. For example, cooks mix pesto throughout. So I have to pay special attention to that, because in pesto are often cashew nuts, a cheaper alternative to pine bitted. Sometimes I forget to ask in a restaurant, but then my friends do that. I've known them for so long, they know exactly what to do.

I will not let myself be restricted

Something has never happened, so I saw the allergy as an obstacle. Sometimes I just consider it as a diet. Then I make a joke for myself, that it is good that I can not eat something, that saves calories. You can also sit up bales, but that's not how I see it. Even though I have a limitation that I will never grow over, I will not let myself be restricted. If you do not like something, choose something else tasty. There is plenty you can eat.

Thesis about anaphylaxis

After the theaterschool I now study Social Work at the university, is in my last year. My graduation thesis is about anaphylaxis. About the emotional-psychological aspect and how we can improve the quality of life of young people between twelve and eighteen years with food allergies. Young people sometimes dare not to eat out or on vacation, for fear of an attack. Awfully sin. If you communicate well, everything is possible.

Turn it into something positive

From the [Dutch Anafylaxis Network](#) I regularly work as a training actress in the Wilhelmina Children's Hospital. Then I do role plays with allergic children to teach them how to deal with their disability. And how important it is to get rid of your parents. That they have taken control of their own from a young age and have a realistic image. There is much to be gained, the basis for the rest of your life. When I had a lecture at the UMC Utrecht and the Amsterdam UMC, I received many reactions afterwards. I noticed that there is a great need for it. Super nice as tips work and people really have something to."

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