

Food allergies seem to be increasingly common and have become the topic of much discussion in recent years. Why do some adults and children have a deadly reaction while most of us don't? I'm allergic to pollen, but it doesn't kill me; why is this different? Why can't my child bring a peanut butter sandwich to school just because someone else's child can't eat it? These questions have given rise to some fervent opinions, both from the allergic and non-allergic alike.

that is potentially harmful. Considering how many harmless, "non-self" substances we are all exposed to every day, it is remarkable how often our immune systems get it right. The act of destroying something harmful can be a brutal one; it creates fevers, damages tissue and makes us feel sick. Destroying a harmful invader is usually worth the collateral damage, of course, because a harmful invader has the potential to destroy us. This is why sensing "danger" signals from a "non-self" substance is so important. If

The term "allergy" is a very broad one. It refers to any instances of the body's defenses over-responding to a substance that is harmless and, in doing so, creating damage. At its most basic level, the immune system works to distinguish "self" from "non-self" and harmless from harmful and to destroy anything "non-self"

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laughed. "It wasn't taken seriously back in those days. The dermatologist removed this mole, making a big incision to get the margins of the tumor out for testing, and that's when she found a second one that my primary care physician didn't even see. I was told if I hadn't gotten both removed, I would have been dead in a year."

it checked. She had just given birth and now, after the doctor visit, was being diagnosed with melanoma. She went for

At that point, Arnold was referred to Dr. Catherine A. Share of SMHC, who specializes in general surgery. This surgery, although lifesaving, left a large hole where the mole once resided. Although the process was painful, Arnold stated that he couldn't have been more grateful to have the cancer caught early enough to save his life.

"One thing I did do was send an email out to all my family to let them know I know I had been diagnosed, and that they too should get checked out," he said. "My niece said she had something worrisome on her leg and was going to get

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