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Bill Aims To Improve Safety At Restaurants



Reporting
Joe Shortsleeve

BOSTON (WBZ) — Going out to eat can be a life or death situation for many people. Twelve million Americans suffer food allergies but there's now a push to make restaurants safer.

A simple sandwich from Subway doesn't look deadly but it was for 13-year-old Emily Vonder Muelen, of Ohio.

"I don't think that most people realize that people with food allergies -- just a trace amount could take them away in a matter of minutes," said Emily's father, Paul Vonder Muelen.

Emily's family believes traces of a peanut butter cookie cross contaminated her sandwich, causing a severe allergic reaction.

It's estimated that food allergies send 30,000 people to the emergency room each year. About 150 of those die.

"Why is the threat so much greater at a restaurant than at a home?" WBZ's Joe Shortsleeve asked Ming Tsai of Blue Ginger.

"At home you have total control," Tsai said. "You know there is no peanut butter at home, you know you have washed your hands, that there is no cross contamination."

Food bought at a grocery store has federal labels, so consumers know if there are allergens on the inside. But when they out to eat there's nothing, so now there's a move to change that.

"My concern is safety," said State Senator Cynthia Creem. "People are dying from eating something that they don't know about in a restaurant."

Sen. Creem has filed a bill to improve safety at restaurants with 50 or more seats. It would require disclosure of ingredients, mandate staff training and improve public education.

"Everyone has the right to eat safely anywhere they want to go," Tsai said.

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