



Morgan on that fateful fishing trip.

My last fish

A story of unexpected anaphylaxis

by MORGAN SMITH

I wasn't supposed to be allergic to fish. We were having a great trip, camping 10,000 feet up in the Rocky Mountains and 200 miles from home in Colorado Springs, Colo. I had caught three wild trout earlier that sunny June day, and had a lot of fun. When Dad, my sister Michaela and I got back to camp, we decided to sauté the fish in butter and lemon juice after steaming them.

Dad handed me a large piece of cooked trout and a bowl of pasta shells. I tried a piece. "This is great Dad!" I said. Only a few minutes later, my gums started to itch. I started to space out and stare into the coals of the fire. "Morgan, what's wrong? Talk to us," my dad said, bringing me back to Earth. "Ev-everything's all right except my gums itch," I stuttered back.

"Get the Benadryl, Michaela!" Dad shouted. My sister, who's 15, raced to find it. My dad gave me a Benadryl. My chest started to hurt a little; I couldn't breathe so well. I started to space out again, staring at the coals. "Morgan, talk to us! What's wrong?" my dad said.

"My chest hurts a little. I'm having a little trouble breathing," I said. Michaela grabbed the EpiPen out of my Epi-kit, which we always carry because I'm allergic to peanuts, tree nuts, sesame and shellfish, and gave it to Dad. He gave me some breathing exercises. On my last exercise, my breathing became really shallow. I couldn't breathe a lot. "Dad, give me the EpiPen!" I croaked.

Dad jammed it into my left thigh, and counted to 10. "Dang! Dang this hurts," I thought. He pulled it out and said: "We're leaving for the ER!"

I know what you're thinking: Didn't you call 911 right after you injected the shot? We couldn't. At 10,000 feet, Dad had no cell service. We scrambled into the car. "I feel like I'm going to throw up, Dad." He opened the door, I climbed out, and threw up. After about half a minute, we got back into the car. We were at the top of a rocky four-wheel drive trail, but my dad went over the rocks. He flashed his lights and honked his horn. Cars got out of his way.

In the back seat, Michaela kept talking

to me about things. My legs were very jittery from the adrenaline of the EpiPen. We saw red lights ahead on top of a fire truck. My dad stopped and said, "I have a son in anaphylactic shock, and I need to get him to the ER right now!"

"Where is he?" the fireman asked. "In the back," Dad replied. "Can you radio the ER in Lake City to tell them we're coming?"

"Sure," said the man.

Dad said thanks, and drove off. A police car came up next to us and one of the officers yelled: "Follow us." My dad nodded. The police car zoomed down the road toward Lake City, the nearest town. The police car pulled over in a little circle, where an ambulance was waiting. I limped into it, with a sore left thigh from the injection. The paramedic asked many questions and had his cut kit out ready to perform a tracheotomy on me, but I didn't need that. My breathing was fine now.

The ambulance took off, followed by my dad in his car, and the police car with lights flashing and sirens going. When we got to the medical center, the doctor and nurse helped me into the emergency room, and took my heart rate, blood pressure, and measured the oxygen in my blood with a pulse oximeter. My legs were starting to calm down. They gave me some water and asked questions like: when did you use the EpiPen, what medications do you take, and how do you think this happened? I answered all of them.

My dad called Mom, who was back at home – and scared. I started to feel better. They wanted to keep me for a while, to watch how I was doing, and I was prescribed Prednisone. We left the medical center about 2½ hours later. I was very tired. We drove back to camp, and I went to bed. My dad stayed up until 3 a.m., just to make sure I wouldn't have another reaction. I've been fine ever since, and we stayed up camping for another two days.

During this incident, I was very scared about what would happen to me. I didn't believe that the EpiPen would really work, but it definitely did! If this were to ever happen again, I'd know what it would feel like. I wouldn't be scared to have a shot because not being able to breathe hurts a lot more.

Now I know not to eat fish, and especially trout. Even one bite can do a lot of things to your life.

Morgan Smith, 10, lives in Colorado Springs, Colo. His mother, Nicole Smith, is author of children's books, including Allie the Allergic Elephant: A Children's Story of Peanut Allergies (www.allergicchild.com).

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