For those who have serious food allergies, any meal can be life threatening. According to the article "Fatalities due to anaphylactic reactions to food" by S. Allan Bock, Anne Furlong-Munoz and Hugh A. Sampson, several deaths have occurred over the past 20 years because of anaphylactic reactions to food. The article was written as a review of a study of 32 individuals whose cases were reported to a national registry. A report including a chart of each case was put together to explain the cause of death for each person and the associated factors. The cases, occurring between 1994 and 1999, were founded in the registry by each of the authors, who then proceeded to contact the family or friends closest to each individual to interview them about the details of the death.

Using a structured questionnaire, the authors were able to obtain the majority of information needed to put a reactive report together. This included demographic details, sequential events of the food ingestion and subsequent symptom progression, treatment at the time symptoms started, transport to a hospital, emergency medical response treatment, information about the food ingested, asthma and allergy history, current medication, associated factors and prior education about food allergy severity. (Bock 2001:191) After the information was collected, the subjects were divided into two groups. Group 1 contained the individuals in whom the more specific details could be obtained, whereas in Group 2 there was uncertainty as to the presence of asthma, use of epinephrine, and history of allergic reaction to the same food. (Bock 2001:191) In both groups, the most common food responsible for these fatal reactions was peanuts or tree nuts. However, given the additional information that was obtained for Group 1, it was seen that all but one of the individuals had asthma and a prior history of the allergy to the food that caused the death. The one individual who did not have either of these factors was a two year-old male who reacted to a brazil nut. Although his case was very particular in that there was no asthma or allergic history, he did show clear signs of an allergic reaction that did in fact kill him.

Group 2 only included 11 of the 32 individuals, in which seven of them were unknown whether or not they had asthma and four did. Two of the individuals in Group 2 also had an unknown prior history of reactions, although the rest were known to. In Group 1 all of the individuals died from some sort of nut reactions, as well as all but two in Group 2. The two cases that were not caused from nuts were from allergic reactions to fish and milk. Strangely enough, only four of the cases had epinephrine available at the time of the attack, still the reaction was so severe that they all ended fatally.

This article was shocking in that most people do not think of how dangerous simply eating can be. I have never associated asthma with food allergies, however I do not have either. I never thought of how many foods use peanut oil and how difficult it must be to figure out what not to eat, although I find it strange that some fatalities occurred when the patient was unknown to be allergic to the food that was deadly to them.