

10 tips for safer health care



This summary card has been produced by the Australian Council for Safety and Quality in Health Care, which has been set up by Commonwealth, State and Territory governments to improve the safety of health care in Australia. These *10 Tips** can help you to become more active in your health care. More questions you might want to ask your health care professional are contained in the *10 Tips for Safer Health Care* booklet.

* These 10 Tips have been adapted from the US Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality patient fact sheets (available on the Internet at www.ahrq.gov/consumer).

1 Be actively involved in your own health care

Take part in every decision to help prevent things from going wrong and get the best possible care for your needs.

2 Speak up if you have any questions or concerns

Ask questions.

Expect answers that you can understand.

Ask a family member, carer or interpreter to be there with you, if you want.

3 Learn more about your condition or treatments

Collect as much reliable information as you can.

Ask your health care professional:

- what should I look out for?
- please tell me more about my condition, tests and treatment.
- how will the tests or treatments help me and what is involved?
- what are the risks and what is likely to happen if I don't have this treatment?

4 Keep a list of all the medicines you are taking

Include:

- prescriptions, over-the-counter and complementary medicines (eg vitamins and herbs); and
- information about drug allergies you may have.

5 Make sure you understand the medicines you are taking

Read the label, including the warnings.

Make sure it is what your doctor ordered for you.

Ask about:

- directions for use;
- possible side effects or interactions; and
- how long you'll need to take it for.

6 Get the results of any test or procedure

Call your doctor to find out your results.

Ask what they mean for your care.

7 Talk about your options if you need to go into hospital

Ask:

- how quickly does this need to happen?
- is there an option to have the surgery/procedure done as a day patient, or in an alternative hospital?

8 Make sure you understand what will happen if you need surgery or a procedure

Ask -

- what will the surgery or procedure involve and are there any risks?
- are there other possible treatments?
- how much will it cost?

Tell your health care professionals if you have allergies or if you have ever had a bad reaction to an anaesthetic or any other drug.

9 Make sure you, your doctor and your surgeon all agree on exactly what will be done

Confirm which operation will be performed and where, as close as possible to it happening.

10 Before you leave hospital, ask your health care professional to explain the treatment plan you will use at home

Make sure you understand your continuing treatment, medicines and follow-up care.

Visit your GP as soon as possible after you are discharged.

Find out more about the Safety and Quality Council or obtain copies of 10 Tips for Safer Health Care by calling (02) 6289 4244 or from its website at www.safetyandquality.org