

# 10 tips for *safer* health care

## 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. (describe the severity eg rash, swelling, breathing difficulties)

## 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 professional 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.

Copyright Commonwealth of Australia  
Reproduced by permission 2009

This summary sheet was reproduced from the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care website and was adapted from the US Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality patient fact sheets.