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.

To find out more about 10 Tips for Safer Health Care, visit the RACGP website at: www.racgp.org.au/10tips or the Australian Council for Safety and Quality in Health Care website at: www.safetyandquality.org.

Call the RACGP GP Advocacy and Support Department on 03 8699 0524 to obtain copies of the 10 Tips for Safer Health Care material.