

OPTUNE PATIENT TIPS & TRICKS

This document was created by Optune patients and caregivers.

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Preparing for Optune

- Optune is a big lifestyle adjustment. While it can be challenging to adapt, there is a strong community of Optune users rooting for you ([Facebook Optune Support Group](#)).
- You will be asked to shave your head prior to the first visit from your Optune device support specialist (DSS). Sometimes cancer centers have a hair salon, or Great Clips usually offers free/discounted haircuts for cancer patients. Try to get a close shave, but don't worry if it's not perfect. When your Optune DSS comes, they can help.
- The first visit may take several hours and can feel overwhelming. Remember that it will get much easier over time.

Shaving

- Novocure will likely send you a Pitbull shaver. If your hair is very thick/coarse or grows fast, you might want to call Novocure to ask if they will send you a Norelco shaver, which sometimes works better on thicker/coarser hair.
- If needed to get a close shave, you can try a first pass with the Norelco and a second pass with the Pitbull shaver.
- Remember to replace the razor head/blades regularly (every 1-3 months, as needed).
- Some prefer a dry shave, but most shave in the shower. For those doing shower shaves, it may help to use shaving cream or gel. These two shaving gels are good for sensitive skin: Nivea Men Sensitive Shave Gel and Aveeno Therapeutic Shave Gel with Oat and Vit E.



Shampoos

- Shampoo type is a matter of preference; use trial and error to find which works best for you!
- Some shampoos recommended by users: baby shampoo (but some find it drying), Head and Shoulders with Anti-Itch, Head and Shoulders with Almond Oil, Neutrogena Healthy Scalp Soothe & Calm.



Skin Prep / Scalp Care

- Aside from shaving, most people experiment to find a scalp care routine that helps prevent, or at least minimize, itchiness and skin sores. Everyone's skin is different, so what works for one person may not work for another.
- You can try either aloe, anti-itch lotion, coconut oil, or moisturizer on the scalp shortly after shaving/showering – and give it sufficient time to soak in before putting arrays back on. (If using coconut oil, make sure to wipe your scalp well before applying arrays; otherwise, the arrays won't stick!)



- Novocure recommends wiping the scalp with isopropyl alcohol just prior to applying arrays, but many users find the alcohol stings or is too drying. Good alternatives to try: witch hazel, Smith & Nephew Skin-Prep Wipes, or Skin-Prep Spray. Some users get by with no skin prep at all!



- You might also want to proactively establish a relationship with a local dermatologist in case you encounter problems down the road. Dermatologists can be hit-or-miss, but they may have helpful recommendations for your individual skin concerns (e.g., over-the-counter polysporin for sores or extra strength hydrocortisone).

Dealing with itching while arrays are on

- If your head starts to itch while the arrays are on, you can try putting Benadryl spray or Royal Oils Scalp Elixir on your hand and rubbing it into the skin area where the arrays end – this may provide some relief.



- Some users say that taking an oral antihistamine helps (e.g. Zyrtec, Clemastine, Benadryl). Consult with your doctor/dermatologist to see if this might be helpful for you.
- Some users find that using an ice pack or ice migraine cap provides temporary relief.

Dealing with skin sores

- It's good to proactively try to avoid sores with the tips above, but they're bound to happen.
- You can proactively ask your doctor (either neuro-oncologist or dermatologist) for a prescription medicine(s) for sores, so you already have it ready when you need it.
- Many doctors will prescribe clobetasol (ointment or liquid form) – this is a potent steroid and should be used sparingly, because it may thin your skin over time. Other medicines that may be prescribed are clindamycin or mupirocin (topical antibiotics).
- Many users trim the adhesive-only part of the arrays (avoid trimming too close to discs and wires) to help allow sores or irritated areas to heal. You can also adjust array placement slightly to avoid sores or irritated areas.
- Some users put Neosporin over the irritated area, and then cover it with gauze before placing the arrays – this can be done if the gauze isn't in the way of any discs.
- If you are regularly experiencing skin sores or rashes, you can also try changing arrays more often (e.g., every day instead of every 2-3 days). It's good to be on treatment as much as possible, but you'll need to find a manageable balance between time on treatment and healing skin irritation.
- For more recommendations on dealing with sores and skin irritation, you can search posts in the [Facebook Optune Support Group](#).
- In rare cases, users may have an allergic reaction to the Optune adhesive gel. If this happens, contact your prescribing doctor and Novocure support.

Dealing with electric shocks

- Unfortunately, Optune sometimes causes small 'shocks' or 'zaps.' These can occur when there is a poor connection between the array discs and the scalp. These can also occur when the cords come loose from the white connector box.
- A poor array-to-scalp connection may be caused by hair growth, sweat, or arrays lifting (e.g. due to movement, or due to the adhesive gel shifting over time). If the cause is hair growth or sweat, try changing arrays more often. If the cause is arrays lifting, try wearing Surgilast (white mesh "fruit wrap" 😊) or an alternative over your arrays and/or try adjusting your skin prep routine (page 2-3 above) to optimize adhesion.
- If your shocks are caused by cords coming loose, you can try using tape to better secure the cords down to the connector box.
- If you are still experiencing shocks, call or email Novocure support.

Sleeping

- It's important to keep your head cool when sleeping! It's helpful to have a ceiling fan in your bedroom, or you can also try attaching a small fan to your bed headboard (e.g. BESKAR USB Clip on Fan).



- Cooling pillowcases can also be helpful (e.g., Bedsure Pillow Cases Set of 2, Rayon Derived from Bamboo Cooling Pillowcase or Snuggly-Pedic Ultra-Luxury Bamboo Shredded Memory Foam Pillow Combination With Kool-Flow Breathable Cooling Hypoallergenic Pillow Outer Fabric Covering).



- For setup, many users keep the wall power station on a bedside table or shelf. The Optune unit itself can be kept on the bed (if there's room), on the floor (for beds low to the ground), or hung on a bedpost (leave unit in carrier and hang carrier from the post). Some users attach or install a hook to the bedframe or wall (e.g., damage-free Command hook) to hang the Optune carrier.
- Whatever your setup, make sure the cords are positioned away from your head in a way that allows you to change positions while sleeping. Some users clip the connector box to their pillow or fitted sheet to ensure the cords always have enough slack for movement.
- You'll need to unplug the Optune unit from the power station if you get up to use the restroom during the night, so be sure your setup allows you to do this easily.

Hats, Scarves, Head Coverings

- Direct sunlight can trigger alarms, so it's good to find a comfortable hat, scarf, or head covering (that doesn't increase heat to your head). Lightweight, mesh, and/or bamboo material is good – you want the head covering to be breathable.
- There are hats with a fan in it (Kool Breeze Solar Hats) that many Optune users like.



- Many also like Mission brand cooling hats (several styles available).



- Some users prefer lightweight helmet liners/skull caps, neck gaiters/buffs, or even bandanas.
- If you're looking for an alternative to Surgilast, you can try wideband yoga/workout headbands to help keep arrays in place.
- Regardless of what head covering you choose, umbrellas are your friend! If you're getting "heat" alarms outside even when it's not too hot – try using only an umbrella (sans head covering).

Traveling with Optune

- It's common to feel anxious about flying for the first time with Optune, but it's very doable!
- You can call ahead to the airline, but many users have reported that doing so never helps and often makes things worse (e.g., some airlines have a 2 spare battery carry-on limit, but they won't check so you don't need to volunteer that information).
- Bring the TSA travel letter that Novocure provides; you may never need it, but it's nice to have if there are any issues.
- The TSA travel letter indicates you should not have the device on during flight (because that use condition was not specifically tested and FDA-approved), but many users have kept their blue lights on during flight with no problems.
- Do give yourself a little bit of extra time to get through security. When going through security, let TSA know you are wearing a medical device. You can turn off the device, unplug your cords, send the device through the machine on the conveyor belt, and then proceed through the Xray machine (if you get the body scan, they usually have you hold the cords up above your head). Once you go through, they'll sometimes do a pat down and/or swab your hands for bomb residue.
- You can call ahead to TSA Cares to request that a TSA agent assist you through security, but beware - they don't always show up on time.
- Your Optune batteries are lithium-ion and cannot be checked. Keep them in your carry on! You can use the pelican case that Novocure provides (should be no-charge to carry on because it's a medical bag), or you can pack your gear in a regular carry-on (which will be treated as a regular, non-medical carry-on for fee purposes).
- If you plan on doing array changes during your trip, pack array change supplies in your carry-on, in case your checked bag gets lost.
- If traveling to a foreign country, call Novocure to ask about power adapters for your wall power source and battery charger.
- If you're taking a long trip, you can ask Novocure to ship supplies to your travel destination.

Random Tips

Usage/Compliance. “Put it on, turn it on, keep it on!” Multiple studies show that efficacy increases with increased time on treatment.

Routine for changing arrays. Everyone has their own routine, and you’ll figure out what works best for you. For examples, search [Facebook Optune Support Group](#).

Stay hydrated. Skin health is important while on Optune, so it’s important to drink a lot of water!

Clothing. Button-down or front zipper shirts are great because you can take them on and off without having to unplug or maneuver around cords. If you’re in a colder climate, you might also look into sweaters or sweatshirts with a front pouch large enough to hold the device (search pet carrier sweatshirt on Amazon).

Changing arrays without a caregiver. If you need to put arrays on yourself, using a trifold mirror may help (e.g. 360 Trifold Mirror with Height Adjustable Telescoping Hooks).



Showering on days not changing arrays. Most users turn off the device, unplug the cords and wrap them under a shower cap. Novocure will supply you with a waterproof shower cap, and you can ask them for more. Some adventurous users leave Optune on while showering – to do so, you hang the unit on a hook or IV pole a good distance from the shower spray and avoid getting your head wet.

Carrying cases. Novocure will likely provide both a waist carrying case and a backpack. For the waist carrying case, you can ask Novocure for a wider ‘belt’ that velcros versus snapping together; many find the wider belt more comfortable. You can also shop to find other carrying solutions – for example, many users like the Osprey Daylight Sling bag.



Wires from the arrays. Your Novocure DSS may suggest braiding or twisting the array wires, but that takes additional time and isn't necessary if you use the cord cover provided by Novocure. (The cord cover also helps keep the cords secured to the connector box.)

Shirt clips. You can use the shirt clips provided by Novocure to clip your gray cord cover to your shirt. This can help keep the cord sleeve out of your way and relieve a bit of the weight of the cords pulling down from the top of the head.



Hooks around the house. Some find it helpful to put up hooks around the house, so you can hang your Optune on a hook while completing everyday tasks (e.g. in the kitchen, bathroom, laundry room).

House fans. If you're in a warm climate and don't have ceiling fans, you might consider getting one or more tall, quiet tower fans to place in the rooms you use most often.

Keeping some hair. Depending on your array layout, it may be possible to grow out back fringe and sideburn hair while wearing Optune. It can make shaving trickier and may cause some itchiness, but it can be done!

