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Head Lice in Daycare: Cleaning & Prevention Guidelines

Purpose

To provide daycare staff with clear, evidence-based guidance on what cleaning steps are (and are not) needed when a child in the classroom is found to have head lice. These guidelines emphasize minimizing unnecessary cleaning while focusing on communication and prevention.

Key Facts

- Head lice **do not live in the environment** – they survive only on the human scalp.
 - Extra cleaning, disinfecting, or vacuuming is **not necessary**.
 - Lice spread primarily through **head-to-head contact**, not through furniture, carpets, or toys.
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Cleaning Protocols

What to Do (Normal Cleaning Only):

- Follow your **usual daily cleaning protocols** (wipe tables, sanitize toys, wash shared items as per routine).

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What Not to Do (Not Needed):


- No need to bag toys, pillows, or stuffed animals.
 - No need to vacuum rugs, carpets, or furniture beyond your normal cleaning.
 - No need for special sprays or treatments in the environment.
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If There Is a Lice Outbreak

- **Notify all parents** in the classroom immediately.
 - Recommend that parents:
 - Have their children checked promptly (preferably by a professional head lice clinic or using a professional-grade nit comb).
 - Begin treatment if lice are found.
 - Remind families that **the children most at risk are those who are close friends or who frequently play in close contact with the affected child.**
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Supportive Role of Daycare Staff

- Maintain confidentiality – avoid singling out or shaming the affected child.
 - Provide families with accurate educational resources on lice detection, treatment, and prevention.
 - Reinforce to staff and parents that lice are **a nuisance, not a health hazard.**
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 **Remember:** Heavy cleaning does not prevent lice. Supporting families with early detection and proper treatment is the most effective approach.

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