

Parents urged to watch for chalky teeth

BY CLIFFORD FRAM, AAP NATIONAL MEDICAL WRITER AAP AUGUST 24, 2013 12:14PM

HERE'S something for parents to worry about - chalky teeth.

It's a condition that affects one in six Australian children and leads to major dental problems. No amount of brushing, flossing or fluoride can prevent it.

The most common symptoms are creamy-brown or very white spots on a child's teeth.

Dentists are worried they are the only people who know about it and want parents and GPs to be alert, particularly around the age of six when adult molars come through.

There's no cure, but early detection and treatment can help save the teeth, says the D3 Group, an Australian and New Zealand network devoted to researching developmental dental defects.

"If we catch it early there is a chance we can save the teeth," says Dr Loch Ramalingam, a paediatric hospital dentist.

"Chalky teeth are teeth that have not developed properly.

"It has nothing to do with diet or hygiene. A child's mouth can be completely clean and free from tooth decay, apart from the chalky teeth.

"We want to make sure parents and other health professionals know about it because early treatment is important.

"Chalky teeth are a challenge for dentists to treat as they are very brittle and sensitive. We need more research so we can manage it more effectively."

The condition is probably caused by childhood illness while the teeth are developing inside the jaw, says University of Melbourne paediatric dentistry Professor David Manton.

"Ideally, children should have regular dental check-ups from the time their baby teeth first erupt into the mouth and particularly when the adult teeth appear.

The D3 Group has set up an information website at www.thed3group.org to help inform parents and health professionals.