

CIGGIES TRAP KIDS IN A 'CANDIED' HAZE

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Children keep at it for various reasons -- to look cool among peers or 'be the boss', or believing that these will help them lose weight.

Using tobacco early can make it that much tougher for children to give up the habit. "Their brains and neural pathways are still developing and when children smoke they may associate it with stress relief and that association makes it all the more difficult to give it up," says Kala Subramaniam. The flavours used to win children over can cause additional health complications. "Youngsters are also more into e-cigarettes, seeing it as



an alternative to cigarettes, and hookah. It has been found that the flavours being used in these create an irreversible damage to lungs called pop-corn lungs," she says. Ingestion of diacetyl, which is

the agent that gives e-ciggies their fruity flavours, can cause obstruction even in the smallest airways in the lungs and lead to this often irreversible condition.

Families are often in denial of their children's addictive behaviours, says Geetha. "Families who get to know about their child/ children abusing tobacco are shocked and often live in denial depending on the type of family. They will need psychological counselling to help themselves and also learn how to deal with their child's habit and encourage them to change."

(Inputs from Priyanka Srinivasan, Niha Sameer, Madhura Rajkumar and Srisha Paul)