INTRODUCTION

Acute infectious diarrhea is a common disease in young children throughout the world. The estimated incidence rate in developing countries ranges from 3.5 to 7 episodes per child per year during the first 2 years of life and from 2 to 4 episodes per child per year of the first 5 years of life **(Black, 1995).**

Pediatric diarrhea is a costly disease in term of direct and indirect monetary costs to each community, and it is a cause of emotional trauma for the child and the parents **(Herrmann et al., 1997).**

There are relatively few comprehensives studies on the viral, bacterial and parastic etiology of diarrhea have been undertaken in developed countries **(Blacklow and Greenberg, 1999).**

Viral gastroenteritis is an infection caused by a variety of viruses that results in vomiting or diarrhea or both . It is often called stomach flu, although it is not caused by the influenza viruses. Viral gastroenteritis affects people in all parts of the world, each virus has its own seasonal activity **(Wilhelmi et al., 2003)**.

Astroviruses were first found in humans in 1975 by use of electron mircroscope (EM) to examine specimens from a diarrhea outbreak among infants. Human astroviruses are a common cause of sporadic cases and outbreaks of viral diarrhea among young children **(Maldonado et al., 1998).**

Astroviruses are common agents in persistent diarrhea, which is a significant public health problem in developing countries **(Walter et al., 2001).**

Viral gastroenteritis occurs in people of all ages. However, some viruses tend to cause diarrhea disease primarily among people in specific age groups; rotavirus infection is the most common cause of diarrhea in infants and young children under 5 years old. Adenoviruses and astroviruses cause diarrhea mostly in young children, but older children and adults can also be affected. Norwalk and Noroviruses are more likely to cause diarrhea in older children and adults **(Wilhelmi et al., 2003)**.