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Jamaica: Breastfeeding Incidence Declines

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According to nutrition experts, in the late 1970s and early 1980s 63% of Jamaican women breastfed their babies. At present, the proportion is 43%, despite high-priced formula and a dramatic increase in infant malnutrition. A one-pound can of formula lasts about six days if used as directed and costs an average of 73 Jamaican dollars (US$3.65). The minimum wage is 140 Jamaican dollars (US$7) per week. Pauline Samuda, member of the National Breastfeeding Coordinating Committee, said the government's efforts to encourage breastfeeding have been frustrated by cultural and social factors. For example, she said, men in low-income groups tend to prefer plump women, and the ideal image of a mother is that of a "fat and round" woman. Breastfeeding, however, often causes a women to lose weight gained during pregnancy. Other obstacles include a lack of support from nurses and other health professionals. (Source: Inter Press Service, 02/07/92)

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