

*Critical Illness Insurance*  
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A thirty-year-old man stands a 1 in 3 chance of suffering cancer, a heart attack or a stroke before the age of sixty-five; the figure is 1 in 5 for women. Along with income protection and life cover, critical illness insurance should be central to any protection plan designed to shield individuals and their families from the financial consequences of ill health. Specifically, these policies are designed to pay a lump sum in the event of the insured person being diagnosed with a 'critical illness'. Cancers, heart attacks and strokes account for over three-quarters of all critical illness claims although, to name but a few, Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, permanent disability, and some surgical procedures will be covered by most good policies.

Often, people look to cover their mortgage debt, or perhaps to provide a lump sum so that they can afford to retire early in the event of ill health. Whatever the reasons, a lump sum from a critical illness policy can take some of the financial pressure off individuals and families at a time when they can least afford to worry about money.

Many people assume that critical illness cover is expensive. As a rough guide, however, a thirty-year-old male could expect to purchase a twenty-year, £100,000 critical illness policy for around £20 per month, including the same amount of life insurance. Although rates offered are specific to the applicant's age, sex and medical history, this example shows that premiums may be more affordable than you think.

Critical illness cover has endured poor publicity of late, with horror stories of non-payment of claims. In fact, some companies have better claims history than others, with the best paying out for over 90% of claims; those claims not paid will usually be failed due to non-disclosure at the application stage. Your independent financial adviser will be happy to help you find out how critical illness cover can help protect you and your family and to select an appropriate policy.

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