

## Typical versus Atypical presentation of illness in Older Adults

**Typical presentations** –the usual signs and symptoms of illness or disease

**Atypical presentations** –Patients with no signs and symptoms or unusual signs and symptoms/unrelated or even the opposite of what is usually expected

**Possible causes of Atypical illness presentation in older adults:**

1. Age-related physiologic changes
2. Age-related loss of physiologic reserve
3. Interactions of chronic conditions with acute illnesses
4. Underreporting of symptoms

### ILLNESS PRESENTATIONS IN OLDER ADULTS

Disorder	“Typical” Presentation	“Atypical” Presentation
Pneumonia	Cough, SOB, Production of Sputum	Absence of the usual symptoms, malaise, anorexia, confusion
Myocardial infarction	Severe, substernal chest pain, SOB, nausea	Mild or no chest pain, confusion, weakness, dizziness
Urinary Tract Infection	Dysuria, frequency, hematuria	Absence of dysuria, confusion, incontinence, anorexia
Thyrotoxicosis (hyperthyroid emergency)	Rapid heart rate, restlessness, agitation, tremor	Lethargy, cardiac arrhythmias, fatigue, weight loss
Acute appendicitis	Right lower quadrant abdominal pain, fever, tachycardia	Diffuse abdominal pain, confusion, urinary urgency, absence of fever or tachycardia
Infection	Fever, tachycardia, elevated white blood cell count	Temperature normal or below normal, absence of tachycardia, slightly elevated white blood cell count
Depression	Sad mood, increased sleep time, fluctuations in weight	Confusion, apathy, absence of subjective feeling of depression

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