



Your step-by-step guide to a happier, healthier holiday season

How to raise your spirits—starting in as little as five minutes

Feeling less than merry this holiday season? Well, you're not alone. During this dark, cold time of year, it's easy to find yourself more prone to depression—even in the midst of holiday festivities. But there are a variety of ways to help offset this common occurrence.

'Tis the season for the "raising of spirits," after all. Which, in the Christian world, means a time of spiritual renewal and cheer. But we can also take this phrase more literally, as in hoisting a toast or two. In fact, despite what you may have heard from the "neo-prohibitionist" crowd, research shows that moderate drinking can be a highly effective way to boost your mood. Of course, there are also ways to combat depression without alcohol.

So let's take a look at the simple steps you can take to boost your mood and raise your spirits—not only this holiday season, but throughout the entire year.

Forget what you've been told—alcohol is *not* a depressant

When you hear the phrase "have a cup of cheer" this holiday season, it's more than just a figure of speech. In fact, a new study found that alcohol produces the same neurological effects as quick-acting

antidepressant drugs.¹

Researchers reported that alcohol consumption can actually lead to synaptic changes in the brain. And these changes produce "long-lasting antidepressant-like behavioral effects."

This study actually builds on a 2016 lab analysis that shows when clinically depressed people have a few drinks, it actually makes them feel better.²

In fact, researchers found that a moderate amount of alcohol—that is, one to three glasses—acts quickly to combat depression, and it can improve a person's mood for at least 24 hours. They also discovered that alcohol follows the same biochemical pathways in lab animals as ketamine, an antidepressant that has been shown to relieve depressive symptoms within *hours*.

Plus, researchers found that alcohol produced euphoric feelings in lab animals. Which flies in the face of the old "conventional wisdom" that alcohol acts as a depressant. And debunks the idea that the excitement, exhilaration, and energy we experience after a couple of drinks aren't actually "real" feelings.

Some so-called experts have claimed these feelings occur simply because alcohol deadens our body's signals that tell us we're tired. But these studies show the opposite—that alcohol *doesn't* dull or deaden the thoughts and feelings associated with depression after all. Instead, it actually has a neurophysiological antidepressant effect.

A drink or two can be good for what ails you

Along with its mental effects, moderate alcohol consumption also has a host of physical benefits.

A new study of female twins in the U.K., U.S., and the Netherlands shows that those who drank moderate amounts of red wine had

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Dr. Micozzi's *Insiders' Cures* is published monthly by OmniVista Health Media, L.L.C., 100 W. Monument St., Baltimore, MD 21201 for \$74 per year (\$6.16 an issue).

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Insiders' Cures*, 100 W. Monument St. Baltimore, MD 21201.

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 Executive Editor: Amanda Angelini

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a more diverse gut microbiome than their non-red wine-drinking twins.³

As I've written before, a diverse microbiome means a healthy microbiome—and has been linked to improved immunity and prevention of many chronic diseases.

Researchers also found a link between red wine consumption and lowered risk of obesity. And they attribute all of these effects to the polyphenols in red wine. (For more about the health benefits of red wine, see page 7).

Over the past 40 years, research has also shown that moderate alcohol consumption confers many heart-health benefits. Alcohol dilates peripheral blood vessels and improves circulation. Indeed, on a cold winter night, you can feel this warming effect in your fingers, toes, cheeks, and nose.

And of course, we all know that a drink or two reduces stress—the No. 1 hidden cause lurking behind most chronic diseases. In fact, alcohol is a time-tested, physiologic stress-reliever and relaxation agent.

Booze's effect on the brain

But what about alcohol's effect on your brain—including memory, cognition, and risk of dementia and Alzheimer's disease? After all, how many times have we heard that booze kills brain cells?

Well, it turns out that's all a bunch of propaganda, too. Sure, you might forget where you put your keys, or who took them, if you have too many drinks. But in

the long term, studies show that moderate drinking may actually *help* improve your memory in later life. Not to mention, it reduces the risk of dementia.

And these protective effects have to do with alcohol's ability to boost blood circulation, which is a key requirement when it comes to nourishing the brain.

In fact, one study links light and moderate alcohol consumption in people over age 60 with better episodic memory, which is the ability to recall past events.⁴ These older drinkers also had a larger volume in the hippocampus—the region of the brain related to memory.

Researchers believe that exposing the brain to moderate amounts of alcohol increases the release of brain biochemicals associated with cognitive functioning and information processing. But they also cautioned that long periods of excessive alcohol consumption (five or more drinks at a time) is harmful to the brain. (Which is nothing new, or shocking.)

Plus, another study furthers the evidence that increased blood flow to the brain lowers dementia risk. In fact, researchers found that men and women who develop moderately high blood pressure for the first time in older age have a lower risk of dementia.⁵ They also have less cardiovascular disease, including strokes, as I discussed in the October 2019 issue of *Insiders' Cures* (“Here's why I no longer recommend any blood pressure medication”).

At the end of the day, this could all

simply mean that as you get older, your body naturally increases blood flow to the heart and brain. So, that one or two glasses of wine with dinner is exactly what the doctor ordered after all.

But of course, as with most things in life, moderation is key.

Know when to say when

I've written before about how an increasing number of states are pushing down permissible blood alcohol levels for driving while "intoxicated" to ridiculously low percentages.

Of course, as a former medical examiner, I'm all too aware of how often true *excess* alcohol consumption is a fatal hazard on the roads. But how much is too much?

Well, research shows that after two to three drinks over one to two hours (leading to 0.03 to 0.12 percent blood alcohol), a "euphoria" stage ensues in *most* people. (This effect is also dependent on your body size and weight. For instance, smaller adults might want to limit their drinks to just one over the same time period.)

This euphoric stage is characterized by sociability, talkativeness, self-confidence, and lowered inhibitions—but with only a slight relaxing of attention and control (or what can also be described as "loosening up a little"). Overall, this amount of alcohol consumption produces a generally desirable antidepressant effect. And is completely healthy.

In many states, it's a crime to drive

with a blood alcohol content of 0.08 percent or higher. Whether or not that level truly impairs your driving ability is debatable. But either way, it's better to not spend the holidays behind bars. Stay within the one-drink-an-hour range to be safe.

However, if you're not driving, I think up to two drinks an hour is a good definition of "moderate" alcohol consumption for most people. If you indulge further, you could be in danger of emotionality, poor judgement, confusion, stupor, and even coma and death. And that's the very definition of *unhealthy* spirits!

The nonalcoholic way to boost your spirits

Of course, there are plenty of ways to elevate your spirits without booze, too. Aside from the antidepressant effects of moderate, social drinking, there are the mood-boosting benefits of simply being social.

Don't believe me? Try going to a holiday party and *not* having a drink. You'll probably still feel a lot of what happens in the "euphoria" stage of alcohol consumption—simply from the social interaction and festive holiday surroundings.

And maybe that's because there's something in the atmosphere this time of year. It's not just the nip in the air and the chestnuts roasting—there's a collective consciousness and a kind of positive energy flowing about when everyone eases up and enjoys the moment.

In fact, the "Christmas spirit," can

How to maximize peace and love this Christmas—and all year long

Making loving-kindness meditation a part of your everyday routine is simpler than you may think. Here's how...

1. Sit in a comfortable position with your eyes closed. Take in a few deep breaths.
2. Think of what you want for your life. Is it health? Peace? Love? Hold onto that thought.
3. Repeat to yourself silently, "May I be healthy (or happy, or peaceful, etc.)" If your mind wanders, gently bring it back to your wish for yourself.
4. Picture someone you care about. Repeat the same phrase for that person, while holding his or her image in your mind: "May you be healthy; may you be happy; may you be peaceful; etc."
5. Now, picture someone you don't have any feelings about or connection to—maybe the person who was in front of you in line at the coffee shop this morning—and direct the wish to him or her.
6. Think of someone you have negative feelings toward—the obnoxious in-law you'll be sharing Christmas dinner with, or a boss or co-worker you're sure to encounter at a holiday affair—and direct the wish toward him or her.
7. Now, direct the wish toward the whole world: "May everyone, everywhere, be happy (or healthy, or peaceful, etc.)"
8. Slowly open your eyes and return to your day, keeping this expansive feeling of benevolence with you, in all that you do.

be seen as a collective aspiration for benevolence toward and from our fellow men and women. But that can be hard to keep in mind when you're faced with rampant consumerism, hectic schedules,

and maybe even reminders of happier holidays in years gone by.

Indeed, it's all too easy to feel disconnected this time of year. But the good news is, our ability to connect with others is something we can improve.

Like a muscle that gets stronger with exercise, our benevolence toward others increases with practice. And a growing body of research gives us a concrete way to "train" for the social marathon that the holidays often prove to be.

Practice meditation

You already know how meditation can calm your mind and body. But research shows this ancient spiritual practice can actually rewire your brain to improve both your personal and collective positive energy.

For instance, one study showed that people who practiced a type of mindfulness meditation known as "loving kindness" (see the sidebar on page 3 for details) for six weeks improved their outlook and felt

more connected to others.⁶

Their physical health benefited as well. And it all had to do with increases in vagal tone.

Vagal tone refers to the health of the vagus nerve, which plays a key part in regulating our major bodily functions—including breathing, heart rate, and digestion. It's also responsible for helping us deal with stress.

The vagus nerve is also essential for social interactions. It helps us control our facial expressions and tune into others' voices. So when we improve our vagal tone, we increase our capacity for connection, friendship, and empathy.


In addition to meditation, there are other noninvasive, pill-free techniques for stimulating the vagus nerve. In fact, there are several step-by-step courses available through OmniVista Health Learning, the same organization I work with to create my online learning protocols. These protocols are led by sound-

healing expert Jim Donovan. To learn more, or to enroll today, visit Learning.OmniVistaHealth.com.

It's the most personal time of the year

Other research on loving-kindness meditation shows it reduces symptoms of post-traumatic stress and depression.⁷ It's even being studied in connection with improving longevity.⁸

Of course, this isn't the only type of meditation you can do. Even just sitting still and concentrating on your breathing for five minutes a day can have a positive effect on your physical, mental, and emotional health.

When it comes down to it, the terms "raising spirits" and the "spirit of the season" can have more than one meaning. Different people "feel their feelings"—and face seasonal stress—in their own ways. But we can all benefit from learning how to enjoy the magic, possibility, and human connection the holidays offer—with or without raising a toast to the New Year. 

A REAL Christmas miracle

Two time-honored holiday staples that can kill cancer cells, skyrocket survival by up to 40 percent, and much more

From evergreens to poinsettias, there are many botanicals associated with the December holidays. But two of the most iconic are mistletoe and frankincense.

They're also some of the healthiest substances you'll find in nature,

with thousands of years of traditional medicinal use backed up by plenty of modern research.

So go ahead and warm up some fragrant frankincense oil, give your sweetie a smooch under the mistletoe, and read up on how these holiday favorites can help

keep you healthy year-round.

Kiss cancer goodbye with mistletoe

More than 2,000 years ago, the ancient Celts and Druids in Britain called mistletoe an "all healer." It grew on trees, without roots to the ground, and stayed green in the

middle of winter. So it's no surprise that they believed it had magical powers to heal.

Since then, Europeans have used mistletoe to treat a variety of acute and chronic health conditions, such as headaches and arthritis.

In 1916, Rudolf Steiner, PhD (best known as the founder of Anthroposophical Medicine, and the Waldorf schools) began research into mistletoe for the treatment of cancer. At the time, most scientists still considered mistletoe just a folk remedy. However, Dr. Steiner believed it possessed unique and powerful biologic properties.

Steiner believed that we have forces in our bodies that influence cell growth—either promoting it or controlling it. And that cancer can occur if those forces become imbalanced. He theorized that a liquid extract of mistletoe could help reestablish that balance and potentially fight cancerous tumors.

While that may sound a little far-fetched, current research actually seems to support Dr. Steiner's conceptual work. In fact, the National Cancer Institute (NCI) reports that mistletoe is one of the most widely studied "alternative" therapies for people with cancer.¹

It appears that chemicals in mistletoe extract may block cancer growth and even kill cancer cells directly. Plus, mistletoe appears to support the body's immune system. Research also shows that mistletoe extract may improve the well-being and survival rates of people with melanoma and cancer of the cervix, ovary, breast, stomach,

colon, and lung.

Mistletoe has been found to be particularly effective for breast and ovarian cancer. As has the cancer drug Taxol, which comes from the Pacific yew tree. In fact, this is the first time that I've seen the connection made, and it's important to highlight—that two of the top treatments for breast and ovarian cancer come from the green plant kingdom.

What Europeans know that Americans don't

According to the NCI, mistletoe extract is one of the most widely prescribed treatments for cancer in Europe. Yet the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) refuses to approve mistletoe as a treatment for cancer—or as a treatment for *any* other medical condition.

The most commonly used mistletoe extract is called Iscador, which is made from a European species of mistletoe that differs slightly from the American species.

There are nearly 200 studies on Iscador in humans and animals. One of the best-known was conducted in Germany and involved over 10,000 people with cancer of the colon, stomach, rectum, breast, or lung.²

Results showed that the people who received Iscador injections had a whopping *40 percent longer survival time* than people who didn't have the injections.

As is the case with many alternative therapies, Iscador injections are usually accompanied by other natural, complementary

therapies—from mind-body approaches, to dietary changes. Together, these therapies help enhance the body's natural cancer-fighting abilities.

Patients also receive Iscador injections prior to cancer surgery, or after chemotherapy or radiation, to help aid in recovery.

But because mistletoe injections aren't FDA approved, some Americans travel to European clinics to receive this treatment. However, there are some practitioners willing to prescribe mistletoe extract to patients in the U.S. and Canada.

So if you or someone you know might be a candidate, consult with your physician—then weigh your options. It will mean booking a trip back to the "old country."

Of course, there are many other natural approaches to preventing and reversing cancer that are relatively easy to adopt.

You can learn all about them in my *Authentic Anti-Cancer Protocol*—a comprehensive online learning tool that discusses no-nonsense, all-natural secrets for lifetime prevention and survival.

To learn more, or to enroll today, [click here](#) or call 1-866-747-9421 and ask for order code EO3VC00.

In the meantime, let's take a look at the second ubiquitous holiday botanical that offers a wealth of healing benefits...

Frankincense: The gift that keeps on giving

Gift-giving is traditionally associated with the holiday season

because the Three Wise Men, or Magi, followed the star and arrived in Bethlehem bearing frankincense, myrrh, and gold for the newborn Jesus.

These wise men knew the *real* treasures of the earth. Gold, of course, is healthy for your pocketbook, but it also has physical health properties.

Gold salts are anti-inflammatories used in some arthritis medications (which would prove important to older men traveling thousands of miles).

And myrrh, which is a tree resin, is an anti-inflammatory and an antibacterial used in dental products. Some research has also found that myrrh and gold may be toxic to prostate cancer cells.

But frankincense—or its more modern name, boswellia—has the most scientific research behind it. It's a plant resin that has been used for thousands of years as a traditional remedy for a variety of ailments. You can take it as an oral supplement (I recommend 400 to 500 mg daily), apply it topically, or inhale its oils during aromatherapy.

Frankincense (or boswellia) has five key health benefits:

1. Bone and joint health.

Boswellia is actually the “B” in my ABCs for joint health. (The “A” stands for ashwaganda, and the “C” for curcumin, both also from South Asia.) Modern research shows boswellia helps reduce inflammation, relieve joint pain, and improve mobility.

Studies comparing boswellia to standard non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAID) for arthritis show that the botanical is *just as effective* at controlling inflammation—but without the side effects of NSAIDs, such as accelerated joint damage, GI bleeding, and heart toxicity.

2. Digestion. Boswellia can help with constipation, gas, stomachache, and irritable bowels—all of which are more common this time of year, with all of the holiday season's rich delicacies.

One study found boswellia to be effective for treating symptoms of ulcerative colitis when used three times per day over six weeks.³ The effects were similar to sulfa drugs commonly used to treat bowel disease.

3. Respiratory health. Boswellia helps treat conditions such as asthma, bronchitis, and cough when used in steam inhalation.

One study found that people with asthma who took 300 mg of boswellia three times daily for six weeks noticed improvements in symptoms.⁴

For more natural ways to strengthen your respiratory health and protect yourself from lung disease—America's third most lethal killer—check out my *Breathe Better Lung Health Protocol*.

To learn more about this innovative learning tool, or to enroll today, [click here](#) or call 1-866-747-9421 and ask for order code EOVSVC01.

4. Dental health. Like myrrh, adding frankincense to dental pastes or rubs helps prevent cavities, tooth decay, oral infections, and halitosis (bad breath).


Plus, studies show it effectively combats gingivitis (inflammation of the gums) caused by dental plaque. It also eases irritation, redness, and swelling in gums.

5. Cancer. Lab studies show frankincense helps fight cancer cells in the bladder, breast, brain, cervix, colon, liver, lung, pancreas, prostate, skin, and stomach. It works by activating genes that regulate cell cycle arrest, cell growth suppression, and cell turnover.

Frankincense also appears to distinguish cancer cells from normal cells, which could eventually help doctors target treatments and avoid toxic chemotherapy.⁵

Frankincense's well-established anti-inflammatory effects may also help combat cancer by reducing the chronic inflammation that appears to lead to increased aggressiveness in some cancers. Plus, it seems to help balance the immune system and boost proliferation of immune cells, which helps fight against some cancers.

I recommend 400 to 500 mg per day of frankincense/boswellia. Your joints will be more comfortable, and you'll get a host of other health benefits as well.

So this holiday season, take advantage of *all* of frankincense and mistletoe's benefits. You'll feel better in mind, body, and spirit. 

Lessons from NASA: How one potent antioxidant can keep your bones and muscles strong—in space and on Earth

Back in the 1960s, my father worked on the Apollo Moon Landing. Which was exciting in a lot of ways. But one particularly thrilling event happened on Christmas Eve 1968.

This date marked the famous “Earthrise” photo from Apollo 8, the first manned mission to orbit the moon (commanded by astronaut Frank Borman). Of course, the year 1968 had been a difficult and trying time for our country. But this historic occasion gave us all a reason to come together and rejoice at the end of the year.

This event also had a profound impact on my career goals. During the early 1970s, I served as a cadet at the U.S. Air Force Academy and majored in life sciences, with the goal of becoming an astronaut. But I realized going to medical school first might confer an additional skill for space exploration.

I didn't forget my astronaut aspirations. As a new grad student, I worked on analytical chemistry, developing instruments used by NASA for the Skylab and Space Shuttle programs.

(We use these same kinds of tools today to help formulate and quality check my Smart Science Nutritionals dietary supplements line. Head over to my website, www.DrMicozzi.com, and browse the “shop” tab to learn more!)

Needless to say, I had, and still have, a fondness for the space agency. In fact, NASA may be the only agency in the federal government these days to show signs of “intelligent life in the universe,” as we used to say.

Research and development for NASA manned spaceflight programs has led to technological advances and achievements in other scientific fields as well—including diet, health, and nutrition.

The key antioxidant that keeps astronauts healthy

One of the key lessons of the manned space flight program was that the human body is built to work best with the force of gravity grounding us.

Dr. John DeWitt, a NASA biochemist, recently told CNN: “Force is what helps our muscles get stronger; force is what helps our bones to stay strong; force is what helps our heart to stay strong by pumping the blood against gravity. So, when you take that force away, you all of a sudden lose a really important stimulus that's important for health.”¹

Now, going to the moon is one thing, but astronauts on a mission to Mars could spend six to nine months on a spacecraft in zero gravity. Research on astronauts who lived for six months on the International Space Station

orbiting the Earth found that they experience muscle atrophy and loss or weakening of bone.

And because floating in space requires little effort from the heart, astronauts lose blood volume and experience heart deconditioning. They also have a weakened immune system and insulin resistance. Plus, astronauts in their late 40s and 50s experience alterations in eyesight. In fact, some have even needed to wear eyeglasses in flight.

However, a recent study found that an antioxidant in blueberries, grape skins, and red wine may hold answers to physical conditioning during long spaceflights and in low-gravity conditions.²

Of course, most of my readers aren't going to rocket off to Mars or the International Space Station. But we're all susceptible to all of the health issues listed above, which is why I'm telling you about this new study.

After all, if red wine and blueberries can help keep astronauts strong and healthy at zero gravity, imagine what they can do for you here on Earth.

Keep your bones and muscles healthy with these two drinks

Researchers conducted experiments on rats in simulated low-gravity conditions. They found that reduced gravity led to a loss of grip, muscle weight, calf

circumference, and slow-twitch muscle fiber.

But in the rats given the red wine/blueberry antioxidant, researchers observed that bone and muscle mass was preserved.

Given this, researchers believe the antioxidant works to promote

muscle growth by increasing insulin sensitivity and glucose uptake in muscle fibers.

Fortunately, you can get all the benefits of this gravity-defying nutrient right here on Earth. Just drink a glass or two of red wine a day, as I discussed on page 2. Or

mix blueberry powdered extract in water for a healthy and tasty quaff. I recommend 400-500 mg daily.

Of course, there's no reason why you shouldn't also enjoy fresh blueberries when they're in season!

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NEWS BRIEF

Research reveals one short snooze per week beats out “a long winter’s nap” for heart health

Just 5 minutes of Z's can slash heart attack risk nearly in HALF

This month, when the days are short and the nights are long, 'tis the season for Shakespeare's proverbial “long winter's nap.”

But who has time for that, with all the holiday shopping, parties, and festivities with loved ones?

Fortunately, research shows you don't have to follow Shakespeare's advice when it comes to napping.

A short snooze can improve your heart health

I've written before about studies showing that quick “power naps” are beneficial to your health—as long as they don't last more than 30- to 45-minutes.

For instance, according to the National Sleep Foundation, a 20-minute nap can jump-start your motor skills and make you more attentive.¹

And now, a new study shows that short daytime naps just once or twice a week can boost your cardiovascular health.²

Swiss researchers analyzed the association between the duration and frequency of daytime napping and the risks of heart disease and stroke.

They followed nearly 3,500 healthy people, ages 35 to 75, for more than five years. At the end of the study, the researchers found that the people who took one or two naps per week, ranging from five- to 60-minutes each, had a stunning *48 percent less* risk of suffering a heart attack, heart failure, or stroke than people who didn't nap at all.

And interestingly, this percentage didn't increase or decrease when naps were of longer duration or greater frequency. Meaning that *any* type of napping is good for your heart, even if it's just a quick “cat nap.”

Although, according to the National Sleep Foundation, timing does matter. In fact, the ideal time to take a nap is between 1 and 3 p.m., when your blood sugar and energy levels naturally start to drop after your midday meal.

The older we get, the more we need naps

Other research makes it clear that getting enough sleep at night is associated with better overall health, including heart health. But the older we get, the harder it is to get a full night of shuteye—that is, at least seven hours' worth.

And this new study suggests that adding a daytime nap once or twice a week may help with that dilemma. After all, the added rest certainly doesn't hurt, and could actually substantially improve heart health. In fact, it may be just what nature intends for us as we age.

If you're having trouble catching those Z's—either at nighttime or with a daytime nap—I have five sure-fire tips to help:

Reward yourself. Establish a nighttime routine where you relax and reward yourself before climbing into bed. This reward should be something enjoyable and relaxing, like reading a book, listening to music, soaking in a hot tub,

or talking to a partner about the better things in life.

Spend less time in bed. When you use your bedroom for work, watching TV, texting, or activities not associated with sleep, it sends the wrong signals to the mind and body. You should try to think of your bed and bedroom as a sanctuary for sleeping instead—whether for the night, or your daytime nap.

First things first in the morning. Just 15 minutes of natural light in the morning helps set your circadian alarm clock to be in synch with waking and sleeping times. So, when you wake, go immediately outside, or into the sun indoors, to get some exposure to natural light. Plus, if you expose some skin to the sun, it also helps boost your vitamin D levels!

Get moving. Try to get your blood pumping at some point during the day. Remember, I always recommend 20- to 30-minutes of moderate exercise daily—like walking, swimming, hiking, or gardening.

Be careful with your sleep supplements. Melatonin is not a supplement I recommend. People tend to overuse it, and it makes them groggy the next day. Instead, I recommend kava—an herbal remedy from the South Pacific that assists with relaxation and sleep at doses of 200 to 400 mg daily (taken at night). You can also try 400 mg of valerian, a cup of warm milk or caffeine-free beverage, one to two alcoholic drinks (just wait an hour or two after drinking before you go to sleep), or meditation, as I discussed on pg. 3.