



# Heart Murmurs February 2026

*The newsletter of the Cardiac Athletic Society Edmonton (CASE)*

## **HAPPENINGS AND HIGHLIGHTS.**

### ***Social Breakfast***

- Thursday February 5 , at Pure Casino 9:30 AM

### ***CASE Bowling***

- In Boonie Doon Lanes the second or third Wednesday. Contact Wayne Jackson.

### ***Virtual Golf***

- February 11<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> 10 AM Evolution Golf South 3038-106 St. To play contact Wayne Saunders [sharway@telusplanet.net](mailto:sharway@telusplanet.net)

### ***Education Sessions***

- Save the date for Monday February 9. This may be a lunch or an evening session. TBA

### ***Essentrics for CASE***

- Lynn Bohuch offers sessions mornings through the week. Contact [bohuch85@gmail.com](mailto:bohuch85@gmail.com)

### ***Save the date***

- The Annual General Meeting for CASE is coming up soon. Please Save the evening of March for this important meeting.

## ***THE EXERCISE INCENTIVE PROGRAM***

The Board has approved the continuation of the Exercise Incentive Program for 2026. CASE is offering a reimbursement of up to \$100.00 per member and their spouse toward any exercise program of their choice.

Eligible programs may include passes to recreation facilities, online fitness or exercise programs, punch cards for golfing, and other approved physical activity programs. The program covers services offered by the City of Edmonton and surrounding municipalities within the Edmonton region.

Please note, the program is limited to the first 75 CASE members in good standing who apply. To participate, members must retain receipts for the cost of the program. Once expenses exceed \$100.00, participants are required to complete an Exercise Incentive Expense Form and submit it along with the applicable receipt(s).

- Completed expense forms and receipts may be: Handed directly to the CASE Treasurer
- Emailed to [case.deposits@gmail.com](mailto:case.deposits@gmail.com)
- Mail to: CASE, Box 4516, Edmonton Alberta, T6E 4T7

For more information on obtaining an Exercise Expense Form, or to submitting your application, please contact, the CASE Treasurer at [case.deposits@gmail.com](mailto:case.deposits@gmail.com).

## ***Cardiac Athletic Society Edmonton - Contacts***

**Wayne Saunders President** Email [sharway@telusplanet.net](mailto:sharway@telusplanet.net)

**Wendy Boyd, Membership** Phone 780-686-0779 Email: [case.edmonton@gmail.com](mailto:case.edmonton@gmail.com)  
**Cardiac Athletic Society of Edmonton** Mail Address PO Box 4516, Edmonton, AB T6E 4T7

**CASE Website** <https://edmontoncase.ca>

**CASE Payments** [CASE.Deposits@gmail.com](mailto:CASE.Deposits@gmail.com)

## ***MINDFULNESS FOR A HEALTHIER HEART***

Stress is a part of life. We all experience it. A little stress here and there is normal. But when it sticks around for too long, it can increase your risk of heart disease and stroke.

Stress is your body's natural response to real or perceived threats, triggering the "fight or flight" response: your heart beats faster, blood pressure rises, and sugar and fat levels in your blood increase. While this response is helpful in emergencies, it can be harmful if it happens too often or if the stress is ongoing.

Stress can also lead to unhealthy coping habits, like eating more high-salt, high-sugar or high-fat foods, excessive drinking and smoking, or skipping physical activity. All of these raise your risk for heart disease, stroke or related conditions such as high blood pressure.

And the connection works both ways. Stress is not uncommon when dealing with a new diagnosis or managing a heart condition or stroke. Feelings of grief, anxiety and frustration can occur throughout your journey. Recognizing and taking steps to manage your stress in these situations can support your recovery and long-term health.

So, what can you do to break this cycle of stress and its impact on your heart? That's where mindfulness comes in.

***Why mindfulness matters*** Mindfulness is a practical, evidence-based way to manage stress. Research shows it can help you manage your emotions better which is a key way to ease stress on the heart. In one study, people with high blood pressure who completed an eight-week mindfulness program saw their numbers drop, lowering their risk of heart disease and stroke. Another study involving people with chronic health conditions found that participants who completed a similar eight-week mindfulness program reported feeling less stressed and more aware of how their bodies responded to stress. They noticed signs like a racing heart and used mindfulness techniques to calm themselves which are skills that can support better long-term health.

While research is still evolving, mindfulness shows real promise as an accessible tool to support your overall health, including heart health.

***What is mindfulness?*** Mindfulness has its roots in Buddhism, says Dr. Bassam Khoury, a professor of counselling psychology and head of the Mindfulness Research Lab at McGill University in Montreal. Definitions vary but all agree on two key elements:

- **Attention:** intentionally directing or focusing attention on something, like your breathing or surroundings.

- **Awareness:** being present and aware of sensations, thoughts, feelings and things around you.

“Many definitions of mindfulness also include non-judgment, acceptance of your feelings and thoughts, and awareness of the mind-body connection,” says Dr. Khoury. Dr. Kate Rancourt, a Halifax health psychologist who works with cardiac rehabilitation patients at Nova Scotia Health (Hearts & Health in Motion Program), adds that mindfulness can be seen as a skill. “At a basic level, it means getting off autopilot,” she says. “Slowing down in moments, checking in with yourself, developing the skill of paying attention to what's happening inside you and around you.”

***Getting started with mindfulness*** When people think of mindfulness, they often picture meditation: sitting quietly with your eyes closed, focusing on your breath. That's one way to practice, and here's a simple way to try it:

- Get comfortable: sit in a relaxed position, close your eyes and rest your hands on your stomach.
- Focus on your breath: inhale through your nose, exhale through your mouth. Notice the sensation of air moving in and out as you breathe.
- Stay present: let thoughts come and go without judgment, always returning your attention to your breath.
- Stay as long as it feels comfortable: when you're ready, open your eyes and return to your surroundings.

But mindfulness isn't something you can only experience seated with your eyes closed. Dr. Khoury encourages people to try different ways to focus their attention, such as walking in nature. Mindfulness can also be integrated into movement-based practices such as yoga, Tai Chi or Qigong. The point is to be fully present and create space for attention and awareness, no matter what the activity is. As Dr. Rancourt puts it, “You don't have to sit down and do a meditation to practice mindfulness. You can do it when you're washing the dishes, when you shower or when you're walking the dog,” she says.

***Tips for building a practice*** Start small and build up. Even just one or two minutes can feel challenging at first and that's okay. What matters most is to start in a way that feels manageable for your life right now. Building a mindfulness practice is about consistency over time, not perfection. Start in a way you can stick with and grow from there.

Don't get discouraged. Dr. Rancourt has seen patients launch into mindfulness expecting to clear their minds and experience peace and relaxation right away. When that doesn't happen, they feel like they're failing. She reminds them that mindfulness is not about relaxation or achieving any particular state. “It's about learning how to let things be. If your mind wanders 100 times and you bring it back 101 times, that's mindfulness.”

Repetition is key. “Practicing mindfulness daily is important,” says Dr. Khoury. “It’s not a pill that you take once. All the evidence we have in research is based on a daily practice.” While daily practice may be the long-term goal, it’s okay if you’re not there yet. What matters is finding a rhythm you can return to. Regular, meaningful practice is what leads to lasting benefits.

Help is out there. Many apps and videos can guide you, and some are free. But choose with care, Dr. Khoury says. Resources associated with established universities or medical research institutions can be a good place to start.

***A word of caution*** Mindfulness can stir up strong emotions in some people and that’s normal. Dr. Khoury advises anyone with a history of severe trauma, panic disorder or psychotic disorder such as schizophrenia to practice only under professional guidance. Even if you don’t have a known history, it’s possible for strong feelings to surface. If those emotions ever start to feel overwhelming or start affecting your daily life, that’s a good sign to reach out for support; you don’t have to manage it alone.

***Facing challenges mindfully*** Mindfulness practices have this way of not only reducing stress, but also helping you accept situations that are difficult,” Dr. Khoury says. For people living with chronic health conditions, this can be especially powerful. “These conditions can come with a lot of discomfort,” adds Dr. Rancourt. “Mindfulness can help us become more tolerant of that discomfort. For example, someone with a heart condition might learn to observe the sensation of a racing heart, and the anxiety that comes with that, without being swept away in distress.” The bottom line: mindfulness won’t eliminate stress, but it can change how you respond to it. Through simple practices, you can train yourself to respond to stress more calmly and reconnect with the present, protecting both your well-being and your heart even in life’s most challenging moments.

Want to go deeper? Try Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

You don’t need anything but your attention (and intention) to explore mindfulness and start building a practice. But what if you want to go deeper? One option is a structured program called Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), based on the work of mindfulness pioneer Jon Kabat-Zinn. MBSR is offered in many healthcare settings, typically as an eight-week course, to help people dealing with issues such as chronic pain.

Source: Aug 12, 2025 [Mindfulness for a healthier heart | Heart and Stroke Foundation](#)

**Cardiac Athletic Society Edmonton Board**

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***Support for CASE***

As a recognized charitable institution, CASE makes a significant difference to people interested in maintaining their heart health. If you make a financial gift, either as a direct contribution, or in the memory of a member who has passed, we will issue a tax receipt.

***Heart Murmurs*** is the newsletter of CASE published each year in February, March, April, May, September, October, November, and December. Suggested articles can be submitted to Barry Clark at [kbclark1@telus.net](mailto:kbclark1@telus.net)

If you wish to unsubscribe from this newsletter, please e-mail [kbclark1@telus.net](mailto:kbclark1@telus.net) with a subject line 'unsubscribe'.

# CASE Events Calendar - February 2026

| Sunday | Monday   | Tuesday   | Wednesday   | Thursday  | Friday | Saturday |
|--------|--|---|---|---|--------|----------|
| 1      | 2  | 3<br>Healthy at Heart<br>BJRCT 11:30 to<br>12:45  | 4   | 5<br>Healthy at Heart<br>BJRCT 11:30 to<br>12:45<br><b>Social breakfast<br/>9:30 AM</b> | 6      | 7        |
| 8      | 9<br><b>Tentative CASE<br/>Education<br/>Session. Look for<br/>an e-mail</b> | 10<br>Healthy at Heart<br>BJRCT 11:30 to<br>12:45 | 11<br><b>Virtual Golf<br/>Evolution Golf<br/>10AM</b> | 12<br>Healthy at Heart<br>BJRCT 11:30 to<br>12:45                                       | 13     | 14       |
| 15     | 16<br><b>Family Day</b>  | 17<br>Healthy at Heart<br>BJRCT 11:30 to<br>12:45 | 18  | 19<br>Healthy at Heart<br>BJRCT 11:30 to<br>12:45                                       | 20     | 21       |
| 22     | 23<br><b>CASE Board<br/>Meeting</b>  | 24<br>Healthy at Heart<br>BJRCT 11:30 to<br>12:45 | 25<br><b>Virtual Golf<br/>Evolution Golf<br/>10AM</b> | 26<br>Healthy at Heart<br>BJRCT 11:30 to<br>12:45                                       | 27     | 28       |

BJRCT = *Booster Juice Recreation Centre in Terwillegar.*