

US court imposes restrictions on abortion pill, ruling on hold

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A US federal appeals court on Wednesday imposed restrictions on a widely used abortion pill, but the ruling will remain on hold as the Supreme Court decides whether to hear the case.

The ruling by a three-judge panel of the New Orleans-based 5th Circuit Court of Appeals would limit use of mifepristone to the first seven weeks of pregnancy, instead of 10, and block it from being distributed by mail.

It would also require the abortion pill, which accounts for more than half of the abortions in the United States, to be prescribed by a doctor.

Despite the ruling by the panel of conservative judges, two of which were appointed by former president Donald Trump, the drug will remain on the market for the time being.

Anti-abortion groups are seeking to have mifepristone banned, claiming despite its long track record that it is unsafe. The case is the latest skirmish in the battle over [reproductive rights](#) in the United States.

At a hearing in May, the three judges pushed back against government arguments that the decision on whether to allow the use of mifepristone should be left to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which approved the drug more than 20 years ago.

The case stems from a ruling by a conservative US District Court judge in Texas that would have banned mifepristone.

The 5th Circuit Court blocked a ban on the [abortion pill](#), but imposed restrictions on access, after which the baton was handed to the Supreme Court, where conservatives wield a 6-3 majority.

The Supreme Court temporarily preserved access to mifepristone, freezing the rulings by the lower courts and sent the case back to the 5th Circuit, whose latest decision will also remain on hold until the nation's highest court decides whether it will hear the case.

It would be the most significant abortion case to reach the nine-member Supreme Court since it overturned the [constitutional right](#) to the procedure in June of last year.

Mifepristone is one component of a two-drug regimen that can be used through the first 10 weeks of pregnancy.

It has a long safety record, and the FDA estimates 5.6 million Americans have used it to terminate pregnancies since it was approved in 2000.

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