

Congresswoman taken off ventilator

By Thomas H. Maugh II, Los Angeles Times

Surgeons at Tucson's University Medical Center removed Rep. Gabrielle Giffords from a ventilator Saturday and inserted a tracheotomy tube into her neck to assist her breathing, according to the center.

Removing her from the ventilator, which means she is now breathing on her own, allows the medical team to assess her ability to speak and is another step toward stabilizing her condition so she can leave the intensive care unit and be moved to a regular hospital room.

The tracheotomy tube in her throat provides a passageway for free movement of air and, if she begins to have trouble breathing, allows a simple way for doctors to insert a tube into her lungs to assist her breathing.

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