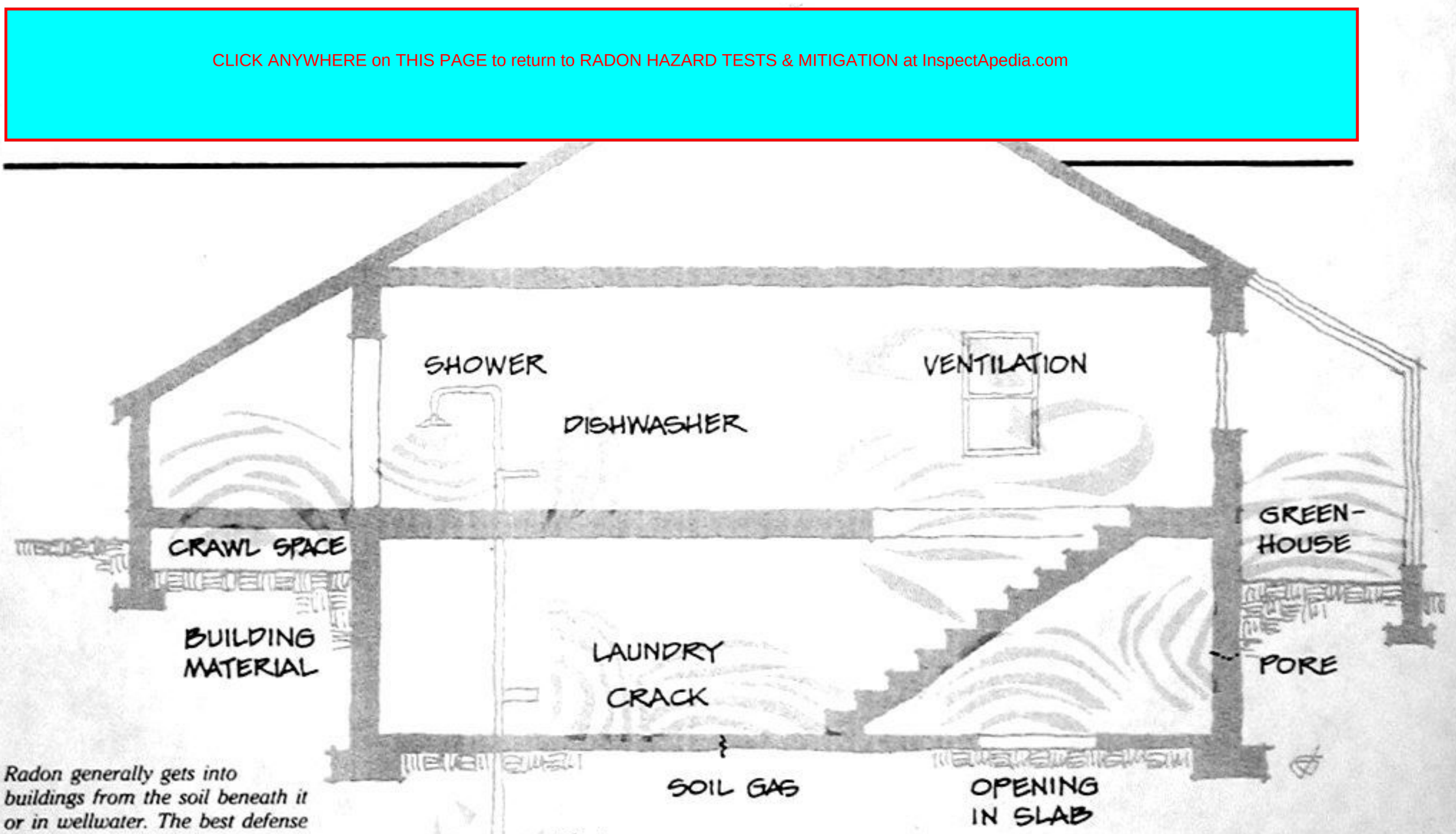
Radon's Threat Can Be Subdued



Radon generally gets into buildings from the soil beneath it or in wellwater. The best defense is a crack-free foundation and, if necessary, a special water filter. In areas where the soil is rich in radon, venting beneath the slab may be required.

Radon and its progeny are the slipperiest pollutants in the indoor environment, but there are simple ways to keep them at bay.

By William Turner and Terry Brennan

Researchers have known for decades that indoor air can be polluted in hidden ways. But it has only been in the last few years that the wider world of builders, homeowners, and health officials has become concerned with the problem. This new attention arises partly from greater awareness of environmental health risks, partly from heavier use of new building materials that may emit harmful gases, and partly from the expanding number of tight, energy-efficient houses being built. And the problem isn't limited to new housing.

The array of indoor pollutants is broad. It embraces formaldehyde, carbon monoxide, respirable dust, nitrogen dioxide, and many others. But perhaps the most pernicious of these is radon and its byproducts.

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